

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study: Outcomes of Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care

How Children who Exit Out-of-Home Care to Guardianship Orders are Faring: Achieving Relational Permanency



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How Children who Exit Out-of-Home Care to
Guardianship Orders are Faring: Achieving
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Disclaimer

FACS funds and leads the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study. The findings and views reported in this publication are those of the authors and may not reflect those of FACS. The authors are grateful for the reviewers' comments.

About the information in this report

The analyses presented are based on Wave 1 to 4 unweighted data collected in face-to-face interviews with children, young people and caregivers; and FACS administrative data.

If you have any queries or accessibility difficulties in viewing the reports please contact the POCLS team at

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Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study Clearinghouse

All study publications including research reports, technical reports and bulletins can be found on the study webpage www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways

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Preface

The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) is funded and managed by the New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). It is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia. Information on safety, permanency and wellbeing is being collected from various sources. The child developmental domains of interest are physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive/learning ability.

The overall aim of this study is to collect detailed information about the life course development of children who enter OOHC for the first time and the factors that influence their development. The POCLS objectives are to:

- Describe the characteristics, child protection history, development and wellbeing of children and young people at the time they enter OOHC for the first time.
- Describe the services, interventions and pathways for children and young people in OOHC, post restoration, post guardianship, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years.
- Describe children's and young people's experiences while growing up in OOHC, post restoration, post guardianship, post adoption and on leaving care at 18 years.
- Understand the factors that influence the outcomes for children and young people, who grow up in OOHC, are restored home, are on guardianship orders and are adopted or leave care at 18 years.
- Inform policy and practice to strengthen the OOHC service system in NSW to improve the outcomes for children and young people in OOHC.

The POCLS is the first study to link data on children's child protection backgrounds, OOHC placements, health, education and offending held by multiple government agencies; and match it to first-hand accounts from children, carers, caseworkers and teachers. The POCLS database will allow researchers to track children's trajectories and experiences from birth.

The population cohort is a census of all children and young people who entered OOHC over an 18-month period for the first time in NSW between May 2010 and October 2011 (n=4,126). A subset of those children and young people who went on to receive final Children's Court care and protection orders by 30 April 2013 (n=2,828) were eligible to

participate in the study. For more information about the study, please visit the study webpage www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care.

The POCLS acknowledges and honours Aboriginal people as our First Peoples of NSW and is committed to working with DCJ's Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes, and Ngaramanala (Aboriginal Knowledge Program), to ensure that Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities are supported and empowered to improve their life outcomes. The POCLS data asset will be used to improve how services and supports are designed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities.

DCJ recognises the importance of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance (IDS/G) of all data related to Aboriginal Australians. The NSW Data Strategy (April 2021) includes the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance and provides provisions in regard to:

- Ensuring that our approach to data projects assesses the privacy, security and ethical impacts across the data lifecycle.
- Ensuring the controls are proportionate to the risks and that we consider community expectations and IDS.
- Guaranteeing a culture of trust between data providers and recipients, including Aboriginal people, through consistent and safe data sharing practices and effective data governance and stewardship.

A whole of government response to IDS/G in NSW is being led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, along with the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, including a position on reporting disaggregated data. The POCLS will continue to collaborate with Aboriginal Peoples and will apply the policy principles once developed.

In the interim, POCLS publications contain data tables that provide direct comparisons between the POCLS Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cohorts. Interpretation of the data should consider the factors associated with the over-representation of Aboriginal children in child protection and OOHC including the legacy of past policies of forced removal and the intergenerational effects of previous forced separations from family and culture. This erosion of community and familial capacity over time needs to be considered in any reform efforts as it continues to have a profoundly adverse effect on child development. The implications for policy and practice should highlight strengths, develop Aboriginal-led solutions and ensure that better outcomes are achieved for Aboriginal people.

The POCLS is subject to ethics approval, including from the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW.

Executive summary

This is the fourth report in the series of analyses using data from the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS) to examine the outcomes of children and young people who exited out-of-home care (OOHC) to guardianship orders. This series of analyses focuses on '*transitioned guardians*'; that is, OOHC relative/kinship carers who were allocated full parental responsibility for a child and were automatically transitioned to guardianship orders when the legislative amendment was proclaimed in 2014.¹ The analyses used unweighted data from Waves 2, 3 and 4 of the POCLS interviews and the Department of Communities and Justice's (DCJ) administrative data. Further analysis using subsequent waves of data collection will provide information on the longer term outcomes of children, and for children exiting from a variety of OOHC legal orders and placement types to guardianship orders.

In general, relational permanency denotes a mutually committed, life-long connection between a child and an adult parental figure. The current report focuses on the experiences and perceptions of children that promote relational permanency and how children who exited OOHC on guardianship orders fare on those aspects compared to children who remained in OOHC relative/kinship placement. This report aims to answer the research question:

- Do experiences and perceptions that promote relational permanency differ between children who automatically transitioned to guardianship orders compared to children who remained in OOHC relationship/kinship care?

The sample used in the analyses reported here was comprised of 142 POCLS children from the transitioned guardians cohort and 291 children who remained in OOHC in relative/kinship care. The report investigated four aspects of children's experiences and perceptions that influence their relational permanency: the carer's commitment and engagement, the child's perceived sense of belonging, the child's relationships with the members of the caregiving household, and the child's connection to birth family members. All factors/outcomes were examined over time – that is, from the short to medium term (Wave 3 to Wave 4) after exiting to guardianship orders.

Key findings

When compared with children in OOHC relative/kinship care, children from the transitioned guardians cohort:

¹ Carers of children who received guardianship orders after October 2014 ('*new guardians*') were not within the scope of these analyses.

- were more likely to have improved their relationship with their primary carer (the guardian) in the medium term (at Wave 4)
- fared better on outcomes related to birth family connection in the short term but fared equally in the medium term. They were more likely to have a good relationship with their siblings in the short term. Similarly, in terms of family time with members of their birth family, the children on guardianship orders had more frequent contact with their mothers and maternal grandparents in the short term; that is, immediately after exiting to OOH. There was no difference in the children's relationships and family time with fathers and paternal grandparents in the short or medium term.
- did not significantly differ from the other group on factors related to the carer's commitment and engagement and the child's perceived sense of belonging.

Implications for policy and practice

The analyses showed that legal permanency through guardianship orders secured safe and stable living arrangements for the children and improved relationships with their guardians in the medium term (i.e. three to four years after the guardianship orders). This finding is important and supports one of the primary goals of permanency planning: to enable long-term bonding and an enduring relationship with the caring adult. In contrast, the children's connections to their birth families showed no such improvement in the medium-term. This suggests an opportunity for DCJ to assist transitioned guardians to better manage children's relationships with birth family members by providing post-permanency support services including counselling and information sessions. Additionally transitioned guardians can be supported to plan and manage positive, meaningful, and effective family time which will help the children to strengthen relationships with their birth family members.

Analysis of future waves of the POCLS data will be useful in establishing the longer term impact of guardianship orders on factors that promote children's relational permanency.

1 Introduction

In recent years, permanency planning for children and young people² in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) has been a major focus of child welfare policy in New South Wales (NSW). Permanency planning aims to create lifelong bonds that will support the child into adulthood by placing the child in a secure and permanent family environment.³ This is achieved through legally permanent orders, that is, restoration, guardianship, adoption or long-term OOHC, in that order. Further, permanency planning aims to maintain and strengthen the child's identity and sense of belonging by enhancing mutually committed and trusted relationships between a child and an adult parental figure – known as 'relational permanency'⁴ (Brydon, 2004; Moran, McGregor & Devaney, 2017; Sanchez, 2004). While legal permanency is frequently assumed to translate into relational permanency, evidence suggests that a change in legal status does not guarantee the permanence of relationships (Ball et al., 2021; Faulkner et al., 2018; Jones & LaLiberte, 2013; Perez, 2017). Permanency is considered broadly within the NSW permanency planning framework to comprise physical, legal, cultural and relational permanency.⁵

'A positive outcome for a child with regard to stability and permanence would be that they are in a permanent, stable and enduring living arrangement where they feel connected to their family and have a strong sense of identity, belonging and support.' (Moran, McGregor & Devaney, 2017).

In 2014, the NSW Government amended the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW) to provide greater permanency for children in OOHC.⁶ The legislative amendment was proclaimed on 29 October 2014, and on that day, OOHC relative/kinship carers who had full parental responsibility for a child were automatically transitioned to guardianship orders. Relative/kinship carers who commenced guardianship on that day are known as 'transitioned guardians', and the carers who

² Throughout this report 'children and young people' is shortened to 'children', unless otherwise specified.

³ DCJ, 'About the Permanency Support Program', <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/permanency-support-program/about>.

⁴ The term 'relational permanency' is used interchangeably with 'relational permanence' in the child welfare literature. However, in line with usage in the Department of Communities and Justice's (DCJ) publications and resources, the authors of this report decided to use the term 'relational permanency'.

⁵ PSP Learning Hub, 'Permanency Support Program: An Overview', <https://psplearninghub.com.au/document/permanency-support-program-an-overview/>.

⁶ For more information on the policy context and current practice in NSW, see the POCLS Research Report 24-2.

received guardianship orders after that date are usually referred to as ‘new guardians’.⁷ New guardians, who include foster carers, are required to go through a suitability assessment process which the transitioned guardians did not. The assessment process requires the new guardians to demonstrate their ability to meet the long-term needs of the child without the need for ongoing case management or supervision.

While one of the primary goals of permanency planning is to ensure relational permanency through guardianship orders, more than seven years on, little is known about the post-permanency relationship experiences of the children who were automatically transitioned to guardianship orders (‘the transitioned cohort’). The purpose of this report is to present an analysis that addresses this knowledge gap. Building on POCLS Research Reports (24-1, 24-2 and 24-3), this report explores the experiences and perceptions that may promote relational permanency among children from the transitioned guardians cohort, thereby answering the following research question:

- Do experiences and perceptions that promote relational permanency differ between children who automatically transitioned to guardianship orders compared to children who remained in OOHC relationship/kinship care?⁸

The findings presented in this report will add to the scant literature on the relational permanency of children who have experienced OOHC by providing a better understanding of what factors influence relational permanency and how these aspects may change over time. This will help us to understand: firstly, whether guardianship orders and related experiences are helping children from the transitioned guardians cohort to achieve relational permanency; and secondly, whether post-permanency support and services are required to establish loving, enduring and caring relationships for children who have experienced OOHC.

⁷ This report focuses on children from the ‘transitioned guardians’ cohort. As such ‘new guardians’, including foster carers who may have become guardians after 29 October 2014, were not included in the analysis.

⁸ Children placed in foster care or intensive therapeutic care in OOHC were not the focus of this analysis. See the Methods section for more detail.

2 Literature review

2.1 Relational permanency

The term ‘relational permanency’ refers to a mutually committed and respectful relationship between a child and an adult parental figure that ensures access to a dependable, enduring and trustworthy source of care and connection across the life course (Cushing, Samuels & Kerman, 2014; Jones & LaLiberte, 2013; Perez, 2017). For young people, relational permanency includes ‘a deeper understanding of who they are and how they fit into the world’ (Samuels, 2009, p.180): that is, a sense of belonging and identity. Many young people who experienced OOHC have reported that the relational aspects of permanency are the most important to them (Jones & LaLiberte, 2013; Samuels, 2009; Sanchez, 2004).

A wide range of people, including birth parents, carers, relatives/kin, non-kin supportive adults, caseworkers and peers can contribute to a child’s relational permanency (Salazar et al., 2018). As such, the relationship between the child and their carer is not the only relationship able to contribute to relational permanency (Williams-Butler et al., 2018). Further, the significance of any of these relationships can change throughout the life course. Regardless, it is often within the most important relationships with the birth family and the carer’s family that a child finds relational permanency (Jones & LaLiberte, 2013).

“The best way to describe it, it’s kinda like you’re searching for a puzzle that you fit into – you’re a puzzle piece and you need to find the rest of your puzzle and that’s where you fit. So that could be family, it can be friends, it could be your community, but it’s where you feel most comfortable and most yourself.”

Tarnie, young person in care, More than just a kid in care podcast: Belonging

This report conceptualises relational permanency as a multidimensional construct encompassing interpersonal relationships between a child and their birth parents, carers, relatives/kin, siblings and other supportive adults. Central to the understanding of relational permanency are three key elements: the child’s connection to a caring adult(s), a sense of belonging, and – most importantly – felt security.

2.2 Importance of relational permanency

This section briefly discusses the importance of achieving relational permanency in children’s development and wellbeing based on child development and attachment theory, and evidence from empirical research.

It is well established that children in OOHC who experience abuse and neglect are at heightened risk of developmental, social and mental health challenges that may persist

into adulthood (Gilbert et al., 2009; McCrory & Viding, 2015). In particular, trauma and chronic stress, including that caused by abuse and neglect, have a toxic effect on children's brain development, impacting cognitive and behavioural outcomes (Research Report 24-3). However, child development theory says that children can recover from such neurobiological, psychological and developmental trauma if they achieve relational permanency and have other experiences that engender 'felt security' (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy Network, 2021; Tarren-Sweeney, 2016; Williams-Butter et al., 2018).

The term 'felt security' can be understood as 'feeling safe', both physically and psychologically.⁹ Children with a sense of felt security feel loved and listened to, feel they have a place to call home, and believe that they can trust and rely on the people in their lives. Therefore, a child can lack a sense of felt security or safety even when they are physically safe. For children in OOHC, many factors influence felt security, including stability, continuity and quality of care, carer warmth and parenting style, carer commitment and the opportunity and permission for children to have contact with their birth family and others who are important to them (Cashmore & Paxman, 2006; Tarren-Sweeney, 2016). These factors also influence a child's potential to recover from attachment- and trauma-related psychopathology (Tarren-Sweeney, 2008, 2016). The importance of children feeling safe and acquiring relational permanency in their development and wellbeing has been reinforced by attachment theory.

In the OOHC context, attachment theory suggests the quality of the dyadic relationship between child and carer and the security that relationship provides may be impacted by systemic and relational stressors that threaten the permanence of the relationship. One such stressor is the care situations in which the child-carer relationship lacks legal permanency. Uncertainty about the permanence of their relationship may cause both child and carer to experience a lack of felt security, which may compromise their relationship (Tarren-Sweeney, 2016). As such, legally permanent arrangements (such as guardianship and adoption) can provide a foundation for felt security in both child and carer, promoting relational permanency (Selwyn & Quinton, 2004; Triseliotis, 2002).

Empirical research supports these insights. For example, Sinclair and colleagues (2000 and 2003) showed that children who had a permanent placement arrangement (in this case, adoption) had a stronger sense of belonging to their carer's family than children who were placed in long term-OOHC (Selwyn & Quinton, 2004). Furthermore, as McLaughlin and colleagues (2012) found, maltreatment has less negative impact on the

⁹ Another important aspect of felt security is cultural safety that is generated when a child's placement is culturally matched and when the child feels encouraged and supported to practise their culture and maintain connections with birth family, relatives/kin, community and culture. Cultural safety is not within the scope of this report.

development of young people embedded in stable, loving and nurturing permanent families than those in OOHC residential care.¹⁰

Several other studies of young people who have experienced OOHC have identified the protective effect of relational permanency. For example, in a recent study of African American adolescents in OOHC, relational permanency¹¹ was positively correlated with higher psychological wellbeing over time (Williams-Butler et al., 2018). Similarly, young adults in caring and dependable relationships with birth parents and parental figures were found to have better outcomes than those with minimal connections, regardless of their legal permanency status (Ball et al., 2021; Cushing, Samuels & Kerman, 2014).

Evidence from literature also suggests that where guardians and adoptive parents are supportive of the relationship between children and their birth parents, their relationship with the child is subsequently strengthened, with children experiencing a greater sense of belonging (Tregeagle et al., 2019). As a result, increasing efforts in child welfare practice have been directed towards strengthening the children's connectedness towards birth family members as well as other people and parental figures important to them. This has been clearly reflected in the recently updated DCJ Practice Framework Standards¹² which places a strong emphasis on 'Building lifelong connections' (Capability 2) for children and young people in OOHC by providing guidelines to practitioners to build best practice on 'nurturing the child's lifelong belonging' (Practice Framework Standard 5). For permanency planning assessment (for the new guardians cohort only) in particular, current practice advice includes considerations regarding the potential guardian's ability to facilitate family time effectively and to assist them in building the ability to manage family time independently and without case management support in the future.¹³ Therefore, it is expected that the new guardians and children would not require ongoing casework support to foster connection through meaningful family time and attain relational permanency. However, under the new Guardianship Financial Guidelines amended in April 2021, the new guardians are eligible to receive financial support for

¹⁰ In NSW, residential care is referred to as a type of OOHC provided to a small proportion of children who have challenging behaviours and medium to high support needs. It has been replaced by the Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC) service system under the Permanency Support Program to better support the children with identified and complex needs.

¹¹ Relational permanency was defined as stability of significant relationships (with family members and other individuals) in the young person's life. It was measured by an ordinal variable and the responses were: 1 = no stability in relationship; 2 = at least one stable relationship; 3 = stable relationships; and 4= very stable relationships.

¹² DCJ, 'NSW Practice Framework', <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/child-protection-services/practice-framework>.

¹³ PSP Learning Hub, 'The Guardianship Process', <https://psplearninghub.com.au/document/the-guardianship-process/>.

family time including meals, travel, and accommodation to facilitate frequent and meaningful family time.

2.3 Tracking and measuring relational permanency for children who experienced OOHC

In recent decades, researchers have recommended that relational permanency for children and young people in OOHC be tracked by child welfare agencies along with other permanency data (Jones & LaLiberte, 2013; Lenz-Rashid, 2009; Perez, 2017) to better understand the interplay between legal and relational permanency. Tracking and measuring relational permanency, however, can be quite difficult because relational permanency is a psychological construct and not many valid and reliable measures of relational permanency of children and young people in OOHC are available (Jones & LaLiberte, 2013).

Keeping this in mind, the present report makes an effort to understand relational permanency outcomes by examining several aspects of a child's experiences and perceptions in OOHC that interact with each other to promote relational permanency. These aspects, adapted from Perez (2017), are the:

1. carer's commitment and engagement
2. child's relationship with the carer and other household members
3. perceived sense of belonging
4. child's connection to their birth family.¹⁴

The hypothesis is that guardianship orders create positive experiences for the children, carers/guardians and birth family members conducive to attaining relational permanency. More specifically, children who exited to guardianship orders fare better in all (or any) of these aspects compared to children who remained in OOHC relative/kinship placement. However, it is important to understand that guardianship orders would result in relational permanency only when all these aspects work in tandem to create the quality of relational experience which is enduring (Perez, 2017). Each of these aspects will be examined in this report.

¹⁴ This report acknowledges the importance of connection to culture in achieving relational permanency. In particular, this report acknowledges that for Aboriginal children remaining on country and being raised by family or kin, where this is possible and in the child's best interests, is of fundamental importance. However cultural connection and/or cultural permanency was not considered in this analysis as Aboriginality was not significantly associated with children's exit to guardianship in Research Report 24-2.

2.4 Existing evidence from the POCLS on children's relationships with carers and birth family members

Although this is the first exploratory research into relational permanency for children on guardianship orders using the POCLS data, Cashmore and Taylor (2020) conducted similar analyses looking at children's relationships with their carer and birth family.¹⁵ Using the POCLS data on children aged 7–17 years who were in the same placement across Waves 1 to 3, they showed that overall:

- children's views about their relationship with their carers were very positive and, similarly, most carers felt that they were very close to their children
- children reported that their carers were high in parental warmth and low in hostility across waves
- children in relative/kinship care were more likely than children in foster care to have a good relationship with each of their birth family members, as perceived by their carer. Children were more likely to spend time with their mothers than with their fathers during the first five years of OOHC.

This report will make an attempt to discuss results in the light of the above evidence generated from the POCLS. The authors note that Aboriginal kinships, community, connection to culture and family are culturally complex and that this report is not aimed at pursuing to understand and/or identify that complexity in its findings.

¹⁵ Previous evidence from the POCLS (Research Report 9, based on Wave 1 interviews) on birth family relationship and contact can be found at <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=591670>.

3 Methods

3.1 Data source

The POCLS is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children people in OOHC in Australia. The POCLS provides an opportunity to examine the impact of guardianship orders on children's outcomes, as the 2014 legislative change that transitioned children to guardianship occurred after the Wave 1 interviews (9 June 2011 to August 2013) and before the Wave 3 interviews (October 2014 to July 2016). A total of 142 children were from the transitioned guardians cohort, that is, they left OOHC on 29 October 2014 (immediately before the commencement of Wave 3). These children form the guardianship group for this report.

The research reported here used unweighted data from Waves 2 to 4 of the POCLS interviews as well as administrative data provided by DCJ. The DCJ administrative data included historical data on engagement with child protection services (e.g. the number and type of Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) reports) and data on OOHC placements (e.g. placement type) up to 30 June 2016. The interview data consist of responses from the children and carers to a range of questions as well as a wide range of standardised psychometric tests.

3.2 Sample selection

The sample that was used in POCLS Research Reports 24-2 and 24-3 was also used in this analysis. A total of 501 children were in a relative/kinship care placement at Wave 2. The vast majority of these children were also in a relative/kinship care placement in Wave 1 (n=462, 92.2% of 501), and a further 30 children participated for the first time at Wave 2. From this initial sample (n=501), 68 children were excluded as they did not participate at Waves 3 or 4. Data were complete for a total of 433 children in relative/kinship care in Wave 2 for the analysis of this report. Thus, the final sample comprised 433 children in relative/kinship care at Wave 2.

Of the 433 children from Wave 2, 291 children (67.2%) remained in relative/kinship care at Wave 3, and 142 children (32.8%) exited on guardianship orders. Of the 291 children who remained in relative/kinship care, 21 did not participate in a Wave 3 interview and 14 changed carer households between Wave 2 and Wave 3. Fifty-one children did not participate in a Wave 4 interview, and 31 children changed households between Wave 3 and Wave 4.

All 142 children who exited OOHC onto guardianship before Wave 3 were from the transitioned cohort. All participated in Wave 3; only one child moved households between Waves 2 and 3. Seventeen of the transitioned cohort children did not participate in Wave 4, and three changed households between Waves 3 and 4.

3.3 Study design: quasi-experimental non-equivalent groups design

This study used a quasi-experimental research design – specifically, a non-equivalent groups design – to examine the impact of guardianship orders on children’s experiences and perceptions that influence relational permanency, between children who exited OOHC to guardianship orders (i.e. treatment group) and children who remained in OOHC relative/kinship care (i.e. control group).

The non-equivalent groups design required a pre-test and post-test outcome for the treatment and control groups. As children were not randomly assigned to the groups, the groups were unlikely to be equivalent. Previous studies examining differences in permanency outcomes between children in relative/kinship care and non-kinship care found pre-existing group differences and/or selection bias (Koh & Testa, 2008). The two groups in the study may have varied systematically in the types and severity of maltreatment and other characteristics (Berger et al., 2009). Therefore, the possibility of pre-existing differences between the control and treatment groups could not be ruled out. These differences needed to be controlled for in the analysis of post-guardianship relationship factors to minimise threats to internal validity arising from non-equivalent groups.

In the present study, the effect of guardianship orders is considered as the ‘treatment effect’. Given the availability of data over multiple time points, each of the four aspects (discussed in section 2.3) that shape relational permanency was measured before treatment at baseline, that is, at Wave 2 (pre-test) and after the treatment at two subsequent time points, that is, at Waves 3 and 4 (post-test). A summary of the design is provided in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: The non-equivalent groups design

Group	Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test	Post-test
Treatment group	O _{w2}	G	O _{w3}	O _{w4}
Control group	O _{w2}		O _{w3}	O _{w4}

Note: G represents ‘the provision of guardianship orders’ while O represents outcome measures, i.e. factors influencing relational permanency. The subscripts indicate the wave at which the outcome measure was taken, e.g. O_{w2} is the outcome measure at the time of the POCLS Wave 2 interview.

Table 2: The control and treatment groups in non-equivalent groups design

Sample	Children placed in relative/kinship care at Wave 2
Intervention/treatment	Provision of guardianship orders on 29 October 2014
Control group	Children who did not exit OOHC and remained in relative/kinship care
Treatment group	Children who exited OOHC on guardianship orders after Wave 2 and before Wave 3 (transitioned guardians)
Pre-test outcome	Aspects of children's experience and perception that promote relational permanency at Wave 2
Post-test outcome	Aspects of children's experience and perception that promote relational permanency at Wave 3, Wave 4

3.4 Variables and measures

3.4.1 Dependent variables

Children's experiences and perceptions that promote relational permanency at Wave 3 and Wave 4 (post-test) were the dependent variables in this analysis. Based on the literature discussed earlier and the availability of relevant data in the POCLS data set, dependent variables were selected to characterise each of the four aspects impacting relational permanency described in section 2.3.

Table 3: Dependent variables

Aspects that promote relational permanency	Dependent variable	Measure
Carer's commitment and engagement	Carer emotional responsiveness (child report)	The Emotional Responsiveness scale
	Carer parenting style: parenting warmth and hostility (carer self-report)	The Parenting Warmth scale The Parenting Hostility scale
Child's relationship with the members of carer household	Relationship with the primary carer (carer report)	
	Relationship with the secondary carer (carer report)	
	Relationship with the other children in the household (carer report)	
Perceived sense of belonging	Child feels happy living here (child report)	
	Child feels part of the family (child report)	
	How well the child is going at the moment (carer report)	
	How settled the child is (carer report)	

Child's connection with their birth family members	Quality of birth family relationships: relationship with the birth mother and other members of the birth family, including father, siblings, maternal grandparents and paternal grandparents (carer report)	
	Family time: ¹⁶ frequency of contact with birth family members: mother, father, siblings, maternal grandparents and paternal grandparents (carer report)	

3.4.1.1 Measures

Emotional Responsiveness scale

The Emotional Responsiveness scale from the Parenting Style Inventory (adapted version PSI-II, Cronbach's alpha = 0.74) (Darling & Toyokawa, 1997) was used to characterise the 'relationships of children (aged 7–17 years) with their carers. The scale consists of five items. Each item asks children how often does their carer: 'Help you out if you have a problem', 'Listen to you', 'Praise you for doing well', 'Do things with you that are just for fun' and 'Spend time talking to you'. Each item is scored on a five-point scale where the response categories range from 'Always' = '1' to 'Never' = '5'. The items are then reverse coded, with a higher score indicating a better parenting style.

Carer Parenting Style: Parenting Warmth and Hostility scales

The Parenting Warmth scale assessed the warmth of parenting practices for children aged 9 months to 17 years (Paterson & Sanson, 1999). The scale consists of four items, which ask carers how often they: 'Tell the child how happy [he/she] makes you'; 'Have warm, close times together with the child'; 'Enjoy listening to the child and doing things with him/her'; and 'Feel close to the child both when he/she is happy and when he/she is upset'. The response categories range from 'Never' = '1' to 'Always' = '5'.

The Parenting Hostility scale was used to measure hostile/angry parenting for children aged 9 months to 17 years (Institute de la Statistique du Québec, 2000). The scale is brief and is completed by carers. The scale consists of three items: 'I have been angry with the child'; 'When the child cries, he/she gets on my nerves'; and 'I have lost my temper with the child'. The response is scored on a 10-point scale from 'Not at all' = '1' to 'All the time' = '10'.

¹⁶ 'Family time' is the preferred term for 'contact' with the child's birth family members in DCJ policy and publications. Contact includes various forms of contact, not just face-to-face time, though this was the most common form of contact.

3.4.2 Independent variables

The main independent variable is the 'group' variable, which is a dummy variable (with 1 = 'Guardianship' and 0 = 'Relative/kinship') (variable 1, Table 4). Additionally, factors found to be significantly associated with exit to guardianship orders in previous analyses in this series (Research Report 24-2) were selected as independent variables (variables 2, 3 and 4 in Table 4). These include Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) reports for neglect prior to entry to OOHC, carer psychological distress using Kessler-10 (K-10)¹⁷ and children's Externalising Problems behaviour scores using the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL)¹⁸ at baseline (Wave 2). The fifth is the independent variable that was derived from pre-test outcome(s) in this analysis, that is, the baseline value (Wave 2) of each of the dependent variables described in Table 3.

Table 4: Independent variable

Variable number	Variable name
1	Group (Guardianship vs Relative/Kinship care)
2	Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) reports for neglect before entry to OOHC
3	Carer psychological distress before guardianship orders assessed using the K-10
4	Externalising Problems behaviour score using CBCL at Wave 2
5	Aspects of children's experience and perceptions that influence relational permanency at Wave 2 (pre-test).

3.5 Analysis

Both descriptive and bivariate analyses were conducted to assess the differences between the control and treatment groups across outcomes and waves for each dependent variable. Chi-square tests were used for categorical variables and independent t-tests for continuous variables.

¹⁷ K-10 scores were categorised as low, moderate and high.

¹⁸ Children's socio-emotional development outcomes are measured using the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL). In the POCLS, the CBCL was completed by the carers of children aged 3 to 17 years (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000) from Wave 1. The CBCL measures Child Problem Behaviours and yields two principal composite indices: 'Internalising' and 'Externalising'. The CBCL Total Problems Score is the sum of all items including 'Internalising', 'Externalising' and 'Other' problems. CBCL scores can be presented in a raw score format, as standardised T-scores or by classifying children as falling into 'clinical', 'borderline' and 'normal' ranges.

A series of multiple regression models were then conducted to compare the post-guardianship outcomes. The purpose was to examine whether there was any difference in the post-guardianship outcomes (short- and medium-term) between the control and treatment groups after controlling for the pre-test outcome measure (Wave 2) and other factors that were known to be significantly associated with the outcomes of children on guardianship orders (Research Report 24-2). Thus, the dependent variables were children's experiences and perceptions that influence relational permanency (discussed in section 3.4.1), that is, outcomes in Wave 3 and Wave 4 (post-test measure). The independent variables (discussed in section 3.4.2) include the group variable (control versus treatment), the corresponding relationship outcome variable in Wave 2 (pre-test measure) and factors that were found to be significantly associated with exits to guardianship as evidenced in Research Reports 24-2 and 24-3.¹⁹ For the continuous dependent variables, multiple linear regression was conducted, whereas for dichotomous variables, binary logistic regression was conducted. All analyses were conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0.

¹⁹ Unlike Research Report 24-2, which used adjusted Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) scores in Wave 2 to correct for the measurement error (using both Cronbach's alpha and the test-retest reliability for the CBCL), the analysis in this report used unadjusted pre-test measures for the independent variables at Wave 2. This was because a large number of those variables are categorical, and measurement errors of categorical variables (e.g. false positive rates, etc) are not readily available for each variable in the analysis. Given that the analysis has already adjusted for pre-existing differences in the outcome between the two groups by including the three factors that are significantly associated with exits to guardianship, the use of the unadjusted pre-test measures is deemed to have little impact on the estimate of the treatment effect.

4 Results

4.1 Sample characteristics

This section provides a brief description of the characteristics of the children in the sample. Detailed information about the sample characteristics can be found in POCLS Research Report 24-2.

More than half (52.7%) of the children in the sample were male, with 40.0% being identified as Aboriginal and 14.8% from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background. Over half of the children entered OOHC before they were three years old. The mean age of first entry to OOHC was 3.04 years ($SD=3.30$). The mean number of ROSH reports prior to entry to OOHC was 8.50 ($SD=7.82$). Around three-quarters of children (73.4%) were subject to ROSH reports for physical abuse, followed by 70.7% for carer drug and alcohol abuse. One in five children had a ROSH report for prenatal issues. Around two-thirds (67.2%) of children had been placed with at least one sibling.

The following sections present results from the analyses based on the four aspects of children's experiences and perceptions that influence relational permanency.

4.2 Carer's commitment and engagement

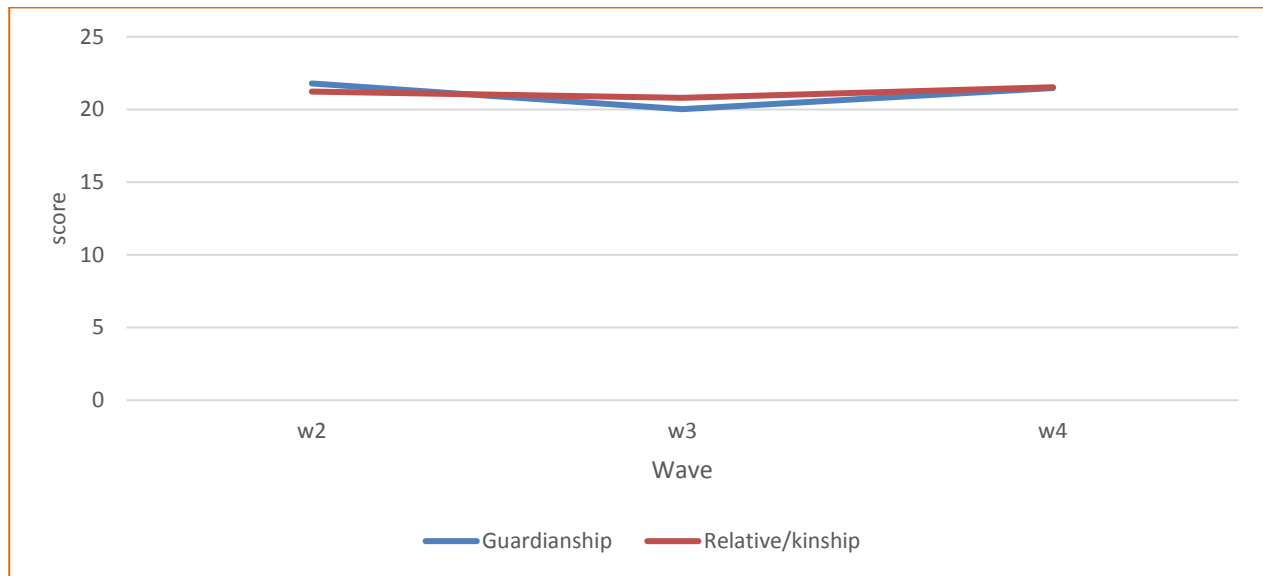
Two aspects of carer's commitment and engagement were considered in this section: carers' emotional responsiveness and carers' parenting style.

4.2.1 Carer's emotional responsiveness

Figure 1 presents the carer emotional responsiveness scores across waves for the treatment and control groups. Mean scores (over Waves 2 to 4) for emotional responsiveness ranged between 20.02 ($SD=4.47$) and 21.79 ($SD=2.80$) and were close to the maximum possible score of 25. The high scores on emotional responsiveness indicate a positive parenting style; that is, the caregivers (carers and guardians) were perceived by the children in both groups to be highly emotionally responsive.

At baseline (Wave 2), the children from the transitioned guardians cohort had a slightly higher mean score (21.79, $SD=2.80$) than the control group (21.24, $SD=4.09$). However, bivariate results showed no significant difference in carer emotional responsiveness scores between the two groups across waves. Results from the multiple regression analysis (Table 12, Appendix 8.2) confirmed this result. There was no significant group effect in the post-test carer's emotional responsiveness scores after controlling for their baseline differences and other variables. This finding was consistent across time (i.e. Waves 3 and 4).

Figure 1: Carer emotional responsiveness scores for children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care across waves



Note: At Wave 2, n=137; Wave 3, n=162; Wave 4, n=260

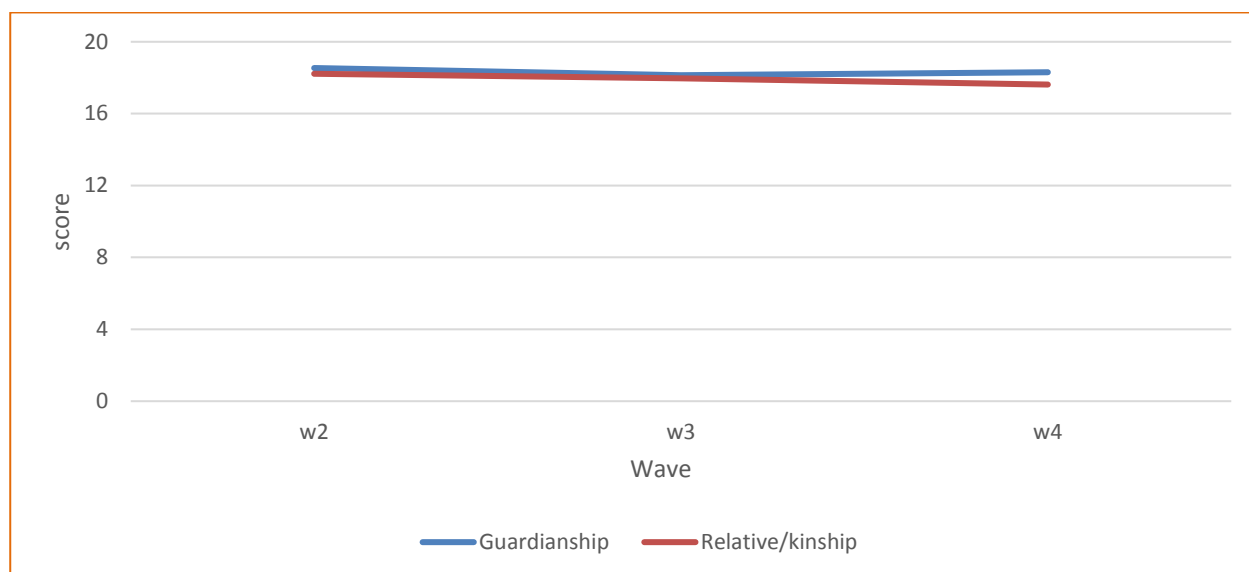
4.2.2 Carer's parenting style

Parental warmth

Figure 2 shows the scores across waves for carer's self-rated parental warmth for both groups. Overall, the results show high parental warmth, close to the maximum possible score of 20. The mean scores (over Waves 2 to 4) ranged between 17.66 (SD=2.74) and 18.54 (SD=2.26). The carers of children in the guardianship group continued to report slightly higher mean scores across waves than the control group. The bivariate analysis showed that the difference between the two groups was only significant at Wave 4 ($t=-2.47$, $n=276$, $p=.01$).

However, multiple regression analysis results (Table 13, Appendix 8.2) showed that there was no significant difference in parental warmth scores across waves between children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care after controlling for the effects of other variables in the model.

Figure 2: Parental warmth scores for children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care across waves



Note: At Wave 2, n=433; Wave 3, n=412; Wave 4, n=376

Parental hostility

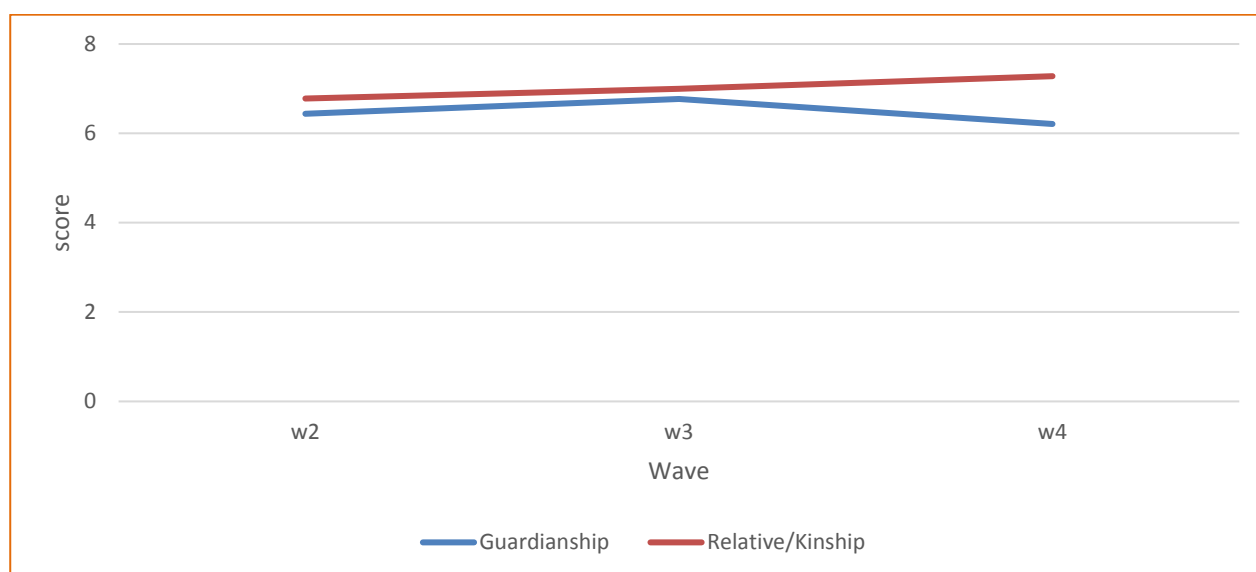
Figure 3 presents carers' self-reported parental hostility scores across waves. Overall, the mean scores for parental hostility were positive and relatively low ($M=6.21$, $SD=3.85$ to $M=7.00$), where the maximum possible score is 30. The parental hostility scores for the carers of children on guardianship orders continued to show lower means across waves compared to those children in the relative/kinship group. However, the difference between the groups was statistically significant only at Wave 4 ($t=2.28$, $n=293$, $p=.02$).

The multiple regression analysis (Table 14, Appendix 8.2) showed no significant difference in parental hostility scores between the treatment and control groups across waves after controlling for other variables.^{20, 21}

²⁰ Bivariate analysis using Spearman's rho showed that carers' self-rated warmth of parenting and hostility scores were significantly negatively correlated at each wave ($r = -.33$, $-.37$ and $-.33$ at Waves 2, 3 and 4 respectively; $p=.000$, $n=433$), indicating that carers who perceived themselves as high in parental warmth were low in parental hostility.

²¹ Children's views about their carer's emotional responsiveness was not significantly correlated with the carer's self-reported ratings of their parenting style, indicating a low reliability in terms of inter-rater agreement. This result is consistent with Cashmore and Taylor (2020). In other words, this suggests that children do not see the emotional responsiveness of their carers in the same way as their carers do.

Figure 3: Parental hostility scores for children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care across waves



Note: At Wave 2, n=428; Wave 3, n=412; Wave 4, n=376

4.3 Child's relationships with members of the caregiving household

At each wave, primary carers were asked, 'How would you describe your relationship with the child?' They were also asked the same question about the other members of the household, for example the secondary carer and the other children. The response categories were 'very close', 'quite close', or 'not very close'. From these responses, binary variables were created for analysis: '1' = 'very close', '2' = 'not very close'. Table 5 presents descriptive and bivariate results for the primary carer's perception of the child's relationship with members of the primary carer's household by wave.²²

²² Bivariate analyses using the Chi-square test showed that at each wave, the carer's rating of the child's relationship with the primary carer was significantly positively correlated with the child's relationship with the secondary carer and other children in the household. The correlation between a child's relationship with the primary carer and the secondary carer was $\chi^2=67.32$ (n=290), $\chi^2=65.69$ (n=267) and $\chi^2=34.04$ (n=236) at Wave 2, 3 and 4 respectively at p=.000. The correlation between a child's relationship with the primary carer and other children in the household was $\chi^2=80.69$ (n=355), $\chi^2=33.85$ (n=332) and $\chi^2=33.96$ (n=298) at Wave 2, 3 and 4 respectively at p=.000.

Table 5: Children's relationships with their primary carer and other members of the household

Child's relationship with the primary carer: 'very close'			
-	Wave 2 (n=433)	Wave 3 (n=411)	Wave 4 (n=374)
Guardianship	128 (90.1%)	126 (88.7%)	117 (93.6%)
Relative/kinship	249 (85.6%)	221 (82.2%)	201 (80.7%)
Chi-square, p,	1.77, 0.18	3.05, 0.08	10.83, 0.00*
Child's relationship with the secondary carer in the household: 'very close'			
-	Wave 2 (n=290)	Wave 3 (n=267)	Wave 4 (n=236)
Guardianship	81 (81.0%)	84 (88.4%)	65 (75.6%)
Relative/kinship	155 (81.6%)	130 (75.6%)	108 (72.0%)
Chi-square, p	0.01, 0.90	6.34, 0.01*	0.36, 0.55
Child's relationship with the other children in the household: 'very close'			
-	Wave 2 (n=355)	Wave 3 (n=333)	Wave 4 (n=298)
Guardianship	103 (87.3%)	101 (87.1%)	73 (71.6%)
Relative/kinship	189 (79.7%)	161 (74.2%)	113 (57.7%)
Chi-square, p	3.06, 0.08	7.47, 0.00*	5.54, 0.01*

*p<0.05

4.3.1 Relationship with the primary carer

Overall, a sizeable majority of carers reported at each wave having a 'very close' relationship with the child in their care (ranging from 80.7% to 93.6%) (Table 5). The proportion of carers who reported having a 'very close' relationship was consistently higher at all waves for the children on guardianship orders than for the control group. However, this difference was only statistically significant at Wave 4 ($\chi^2=10.83$, $p=.00$, $n=374$), indicating that children who were on guardianship orders were reported to have a more improved relationship with the primary carer in the medium term than children who remained in relative/kinship care. This is confirmed by the binary logistic regression model (odds ratio 2.44) that takes into account the pre-existing differences in the relationship and other covariates in the model (as shown in Table 15, Appendix 8.3).

4.3.2 Relationship with the secondary carer

A slightly different pattern can be seen in the children's relationship with the secondary carer (Table 5). In the short term (Wave 3), the relationship between the children in the guardianship cohort and their secondary carers improved to a greater extent (7 percentage point increase from Wave 2) and the difference in relationship between the groups was significant ($\chi^2=6.34$, $p=.01$, $n=263$). However, this difference was not statistically significant at Wave 3 or Wave 4 after controlling for other variables (Table 6).

4.3.3 Relationship with other children in the caregiving household

The proportion of children reported by their primary carer to have a ‘very close’ relationship with the other children in the household was consistently higher in the guardianship group than in the control group, but the difference was significant only at Wave 3 and 4 (Table 5). However, binary logistic regression analyses showed no significant differences in children’s relationships with other children in the household between the groups after adjusting for other variables (Table 6). This result was consistent across waves.

Table 6: Group effect (guardianship vs relative/kinship) in the regression models for children’s relationships with members of the caregiving household

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Relationship with the primary carer: very close/not very close						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.03	0.48–1.95	0.94	0.89	1.05–5.69	0.03*
Relationship with the secondary carer: very close/not very close						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.73	0.88–4.89	0.09	0.21	0.62–2.47	0.54
Relationship with other children of the household: very close/not very close						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.46	0.77–3.28	0.21	0.36	0.79–2.58	0.23

*p<0.05

Note: Table 6 presents the results showing the effect of the main independent variable only (guardianship group vs relative/kinship group) on each dependent variable (relationship with primary carer, secondary carer and other children of the household). The final models are presented in Tables 15, 16 and 17 in Appendix 8.3.

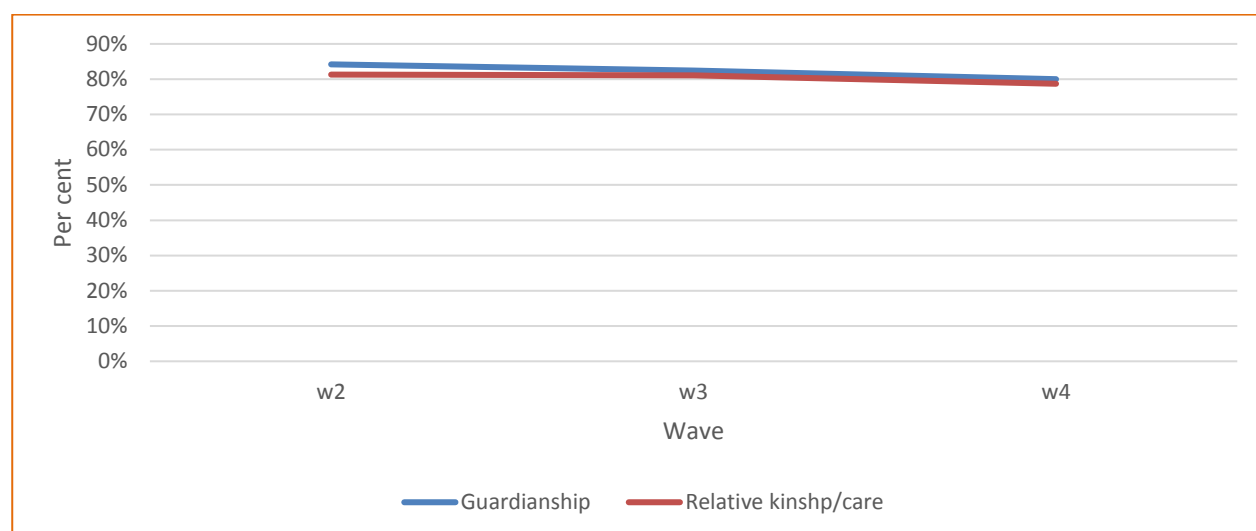
4.4 Perceived sense of belonging

Perceived sense of belonging was measured through the four variables as described in Table 3. Two of those variables are carers' responses,²³ and the other two are children's responses.²⁴

4.4.1 Feel part of the family

Children were asked about the extent to which their carer helped them to feel part of the family (recoded as 'always' = '1' and 'not always' = '0'). Most children (almost 80%) said that their carer 'always' helped them to feel part of the family. Across waves, a similar proportion of children from the guardianship group and relative/kinship group responded 'always' (Figure 4). Results from both chi-square tests and logistic regression analyses show that these differences were not statistically significant at any wave (Wave 2: $\chi^2=0.15$, $p=0.69$, Wave 3: $\chi^2=0.04$, $p=.85$; Wave 4: $\chi^2=2.0$, $p=.57$) (Table 18, Appendix 8.4).

Figure 4: Proportion of children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care whose carer 'always' make them feel part of the family across waves



²³ Bivariate analysis using Spearman's rho showed that at each wave, the two carer-reported variables comprising the child's sense of belonging ('how well the child is going at the moment' and 'how settled the child is') were significantly correlated ($\chi^2=433.00$, $n=433$; $\chi^2=115.27$, $n=412$; $\chi^2=64.55$, $n=375$; at $p=.000$ at Wave 2, 3 and 4 respectively). This indicates that children who were reported to be going well were also perceived to be well settled in the current arrangement.

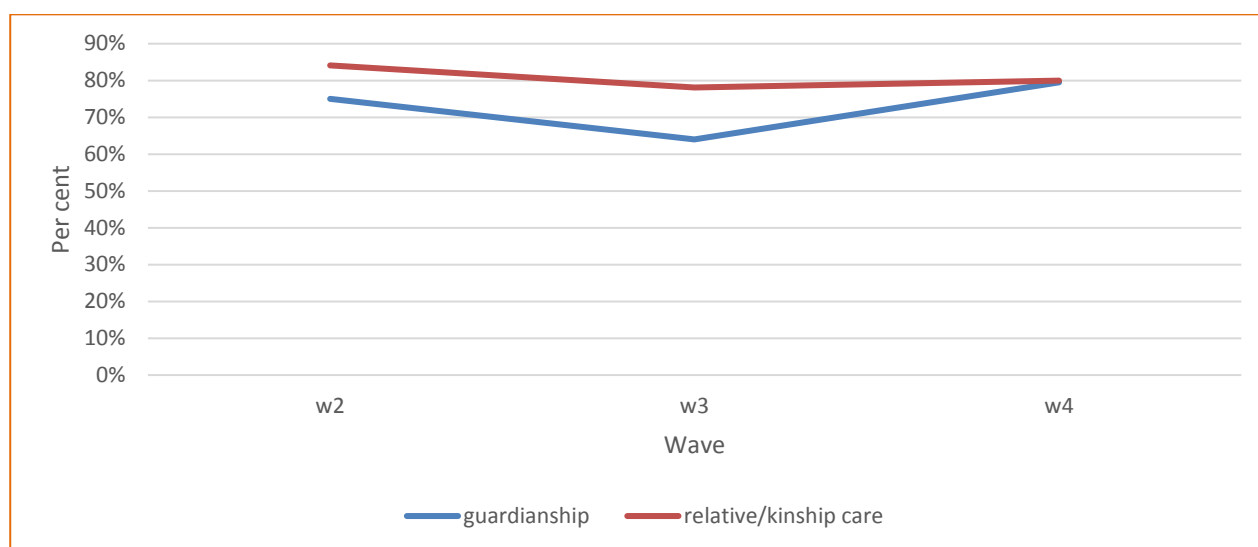
²⁴ Bivariate analysis using Spearman's rho showed that at each wave, the two child-reported variables comprising the child's sense of belonging ('how happy they feel living here' and 'how often the carer make you feel part of the family') were significantly correlated ($\chi^2=21.83$, $n=121$; $\chi^2=17.10$, $n=153$; $\chi^2=50.37$, $n=255$; at $p=.000$ at Wave 2, 3 and 4 respectively). This indicates that children whose carer made them feel part of the family also felt happy in their current placement.

Note: Wave 2, n=433; Wave 3, n=413; Wave 4, n=376

4.4.2 Feeling happy living here

Children were asked whether they were happy living in their current placement (recoded as 'very happy' = '1', 'not very happy' = '0'). Most of the children (80% or higher) who remained in relative/kinship care said they were 'very happy' in their current placement, although the proportion decreased slightly over time (Figure 5). A smaller proportion of children on guardianship orders indicated that they were 'very happy' to live in their current arrangements at Waves 2 and 3, but they caught up with the control group by Wave 4. Bivariate analysis showed that these differences were not statistically significant (Wave 2: $\chi^2=1.39$, $p=0.24$; Wave 3: $\chi^2=3.46$, $p=.06$; Wave 4: $\chi^2=.00$, $p=.92$). The result was consistent in the binary logistic regression; that is, after controlling for other variables, no statistically significant difference was found between the treatment and control groups in how happy they felt living in their current placement at any wave (Table 19, Appendix 8.4).

Figure 5: Proportion of children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care who felt 'very happy' living in the current arrangement across waves



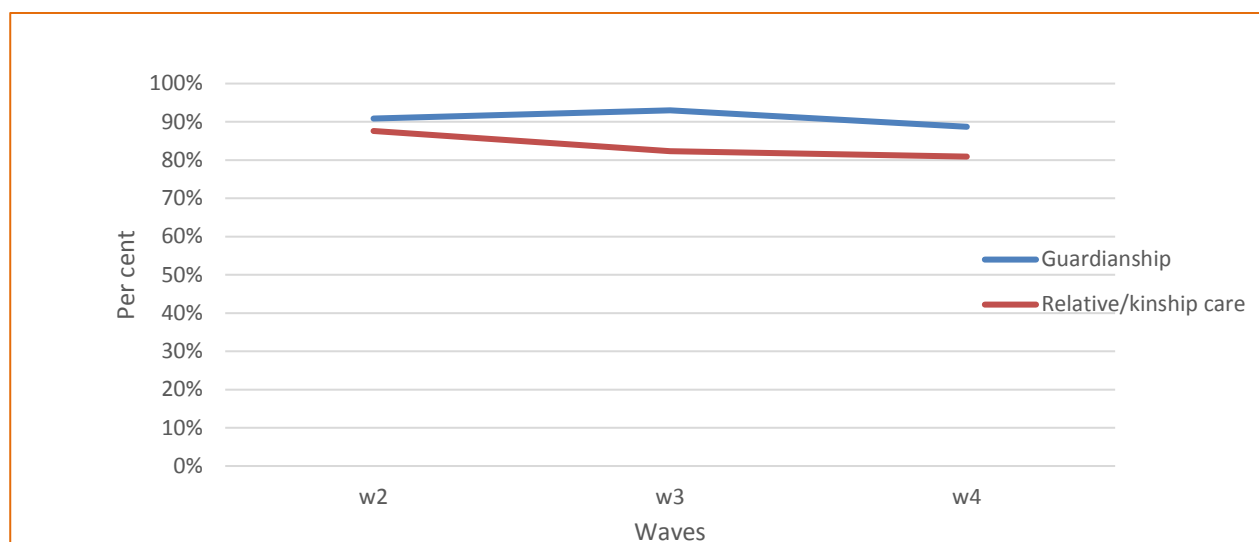
Note: Wave 2, n=433; Wave 3, n=413; Wave 4, n=376

4.4.3 How settled the child is

Carers were asked to indicate how well settled they perceived the child to be at each wave (recoded as 'very well' = 1, 'not very well' = '0'). The majority of carers (72.3–88.7%) reported that the child was very well settled (Figure 6). Across waves, a higher proportion of children on guardianship orders were reported by their carer to be 'very well settled' than children who remained in relative/kinship care. This difference was

statistically significant at Wave 3 ($\chi^2=8.79$, $p=.003$) and marginally significant at Wave 4 ($\chi^2=3.69$, $p=0.05$). However, binary logistic regression results showed that after controlling for other variables, no significant difference was found between the groups at Waves 3 and 4 (Table 20, Appendix 8.4).

Figure 6: Proportion of children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care who were ‘very well settled’ in the current arrangement across waves

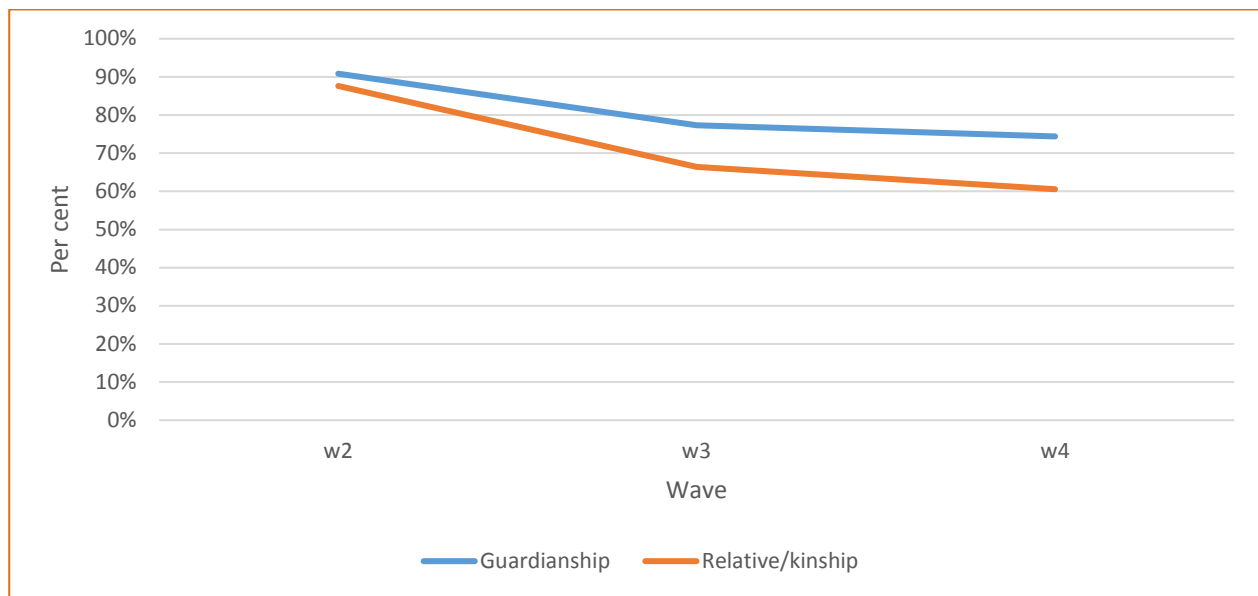


Note: Wave 2, $n=433$; Wave 3, $n=413$; Wave 4, $n=376$

4.4.4 How well the child is going at the moment

Carers were asked at each wave to indicate how well the child was going at that time (recoded as ‘very well’ = ‘1’, ‘not very well’ = ‘0’). Over time, the proportion of children reported by their carers as going ‘very well’ decreased from 88.7% at Wave 2 to 56.6% at Wave 4 (Figure 7). Children on guardianship orders consistently did better than children who remained in relative/kinship care. The difference between the groups was statistically significant at Wave 3 ($\chi^2=5.25$, $p=.02$) and at Wave 4 ($\chi^2=7.04$, $p=.00$). However, after controlling for other variables, the difference between the treatment and control groups was not statistically significant at either Wave 3 or 4 (Table 21, Appendix 8.4).

Figure 7: Proportion of children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care who are going very well across waves



Note: Wave 2, n=433; Wave 3, n=413; Wave 4, n=376

4.5 Connection to birth family

Two variables 'family time i.e. frequency of contact with birth family' and 'quality of relationships with birth family members' were explored to understand the effect of guardianship orders on children's connection to birth family members. Responses were provided by the primary carer. Frequency of contact was expressed as a binary variable²⁵ in which 'at least monthly' = '0' and 'at least weekly' = '1'. The child's relationship with their birth family was expressed as a binary variable in which 'good' = '1' and 'not good' = '0'.

4.5.1 Quality of relationship with birth family members

Table 7 shows the proportion of children reported by their carers as having a 'good' relationship with their birth family members, including their mother, father, siblings, and maternal and paternal grandparents. A higher proportion of children on guardianship orders reportedly had good relationships with both birth mother and father across waves than the children in the relative/kinship group. The difference between the groups in their relationship with their birth mother was statistically significant at Wave 2 ($\chi^2=4.92$, $p=.02$), that is, before the exit to guardianship. For the child's relationship with their birth father, the difference was statistically significant at Wave 2 ($\chi^2=7.07$, $p=.00$) and Wave 4

²⁵ The binary variable was derived by recoding 'less than monthly' and 'at least monthly' as 'at least monthly' = 0; and 'at least weekly' and 'most days' as 'at least weekly' = 1.

($\chi^2=4.26$, $p=.03$). There was no significant difference between the groups in their relationships with their siblings, maternal grandparents and paternal grandparents. Note that for the guardianship group, 62.9%, 63.5% and 55.8% of children had been placed with at least one sibling at Wave 2, 3 and 4 respectively. For the control group, 68.1%, 58.8% and 50% had been placed with siblings across Waves 2 to 4.²⁶

Table 7: Proportion of children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care having a good relationship with birth family members across waves

Child has a good relationship with	Guardianship			Relative/kinship care		
	Wave 2 n (%)	Wave 3 n (%)	Wave 4 n (%)	Wave 2 n (%)	Wave 3 n (%)	Wave 4 n (%)
Mother	60 (43.2%*)	45 (38.5%)	51 (38.1%)	92 (32.2%*)	73 (29.8%)	74 (28.6%)
Father	61 (43.9%*)	51 (38.1%)	44 (37.6%*)	88 (30.8%*)	74 (28.6%)	66 (26.9%*)
Siblings	74 (53.2%)	75 (56.0%)	56 (47.9%)	168 (58.7%)	130 (50.2%)	118 (48.2%)
Maternal grandparents	65 (46.8%)	53 (39.6%)	41 (29.8%)	108 (37.8%)	85 (32.8%)	73 (35.0%)
Paternal grandparents	44 (31.7%)	39 (29.1%)	36 (30.8%)	82 (28.7%)	69 (26.6%)	58 (23.7%)

* $P<.05$

The binary logistic regression showed that, after controlling for other variables, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups for the child's relationship with their mother, father or paternal grandparents at Waves 3 and 4 (Table 8, main independent variable only). In contrast, the difference between the groups for the child's relationship with their siblings was statistically significant at Wave 3 (odds ratio 1.70), although this difference disappeared by Wave 4. Results of the full models are presented in Tables 22–26 in Appendix 8.5.

²⁶ Supplementary analysis also showed that a higher proportion of children who had more frequent contact (i.e. at least weekly) were reported to have good relationships with their mother, father and siblings across waves (mother (57.5%, 43.1%, 60%), father (81.5%, 76.3%, 86.7%) and siblings (85.7%, 82.8%, 80.0%) at Wave 2, 3 and 4 respectively) than those with less frequent contact.

Table 8: Group effect (guardianship vs relative/kinship) in the regression models for children's relationship with the members of the birth family

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Good relationship with mother						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.53	0.86–2.25	0.17	-0.05	0.55–1.63	0.85
Good relationship with father						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.03	0.59–1.79	0.90	0.05	0.59–1.87	0.87
Good relationship with siblings						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.53	1.02–2.85	0.04*	0.10	0.657–1.82	0.73
Good relationship with maternal grandparents						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.14	0.66–2.01	0.61	0.11	0.65–1.90	0.68
Good relationship with paternal grandparents						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.24	0.69–2.32	0.44	0.29	0.76–2.37	0.31

* P<.05

4.5.2 Family time arrangements (contact) with birth family

Table 9 shows the proportion of children across both groups with at least weekly contact with their birth family. Overall, the majority of children from both groups were more likely to have monthly contact than weekly contact. Furthermore, a higher proportion of children from the guardianship group had more frequent contact, that is, at least weekly with their birth mother and maternal grandparents compared to children from the relative/kinship care group at Waves 3 and 4. However, the difference was significant only at Wave 3 ($\chi^2=10.80$, $p= .001$ for mother; and $\chi^2=4.01$, $p=.045$ for maternal grandparents).

Table 9: Proportion of children on guardianship orders and those who remained in relative/kinship care having at least weekly contact with birth family members across waves

Children with at least weekly contact with (%)	Guardianship			Relative/kinship care		
	Wave 2 n (%)	Wave 3 n (%)	Wave 4 n (%)	Wave 2 n (%)	Wave 3 n (%)	Wave 4 n (%)
Mother	12 (11.3%)	27 (27.6%)*	18 (24.7%)	28 (13.5%)	24 (12.2%)*	27 (16.4%)
Father	6 (7.5%)	14 (19.4%)	12 (18.8%)	21 (14.9%)	24 (17.6%)	18 (17.3%)
Siblings	8 (13.1)	13 (18.6%)	10 (20.8%)	27 (21.4%)	16 (13.3%)	15 (12.0%)
Maternal grandparents	9 (22.0%)	10 (38.5%)*	5 (16.7%)	19 (21.1%)	16 (19.3%)*	10 (14.7%)
Paternal grandparents	np	5 (11.6%)	np	9 (13.6%)	11 (20.8%)	5 (9.3%)

* P<.05, np = not publishable

The binary logistic regression showed that, after controlling for other variables, there was no significant difference between the groups in the frequency of contact between the children and their fathers, siblings or paternal grandparents at Waves 3 and 4 (Table 10, main independent variable only). However, children's contact with their mothers and maternal grandparents differed at Wave 3 with children on guardianship orders having more weekly contact with their mothers (odds ratio 3.87) and maternal grandparents (odds ratio 6.93) immediately after exiting to OOHC than the children who remained in relative/kinship care. However, this difference was not statistically significant at Wave 4. Results for the full models are presented in Tables 27–31 in Appendix 8.6.

Table 10: Group effect (guardianship vs relative/kinship) in the regression models for children's family time (contact) with the members of the birth family

Dependent variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard-ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard-ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
At least weekly contact with mother						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	1.35	1.66–9.02	0.00*	0.36	0.60-3.43	0.41
At least weekly contact with father						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.03	0.39–2.42	0.94	0.13	0.41-3.11	0.81
At least weekly contact with siblings						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.57	0.52–5.20	0.36	0.36	0.41–5.00	0.57
At least weekly contact with maternal grandparents						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	1.94	1.14–42.05	0.03*	0.32	0.31–6.24	0.67
At least weekly contact with paternal grandparents						
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.26	0.11–5.31	0.79	-16.93	0.00	0.99

* P<.05

Table 11 provides a summary of the results discussed in section 4.

Table 11: Summary of results

Dependent variables	Post guardianship group differences (Guardianship vs Relative/kinship care children)	
	Wave 3 (short term)	Wave 4 (medium term)
-		
Carer's commitment and engagement		
Carer emotional responsiveness	Not significant	Not significant
Parenting warmth	Not significant	Not significant
Parenting hostility	Not significant	Not significant
Child's relationship with the members of carer household		
Primary carer	Not significant	Significant
Secondary carer	Not significant	Not significant
Other children in the household	Not significant	Not significant
Perceived sense of belonging		
Child feels happy living here	Not significant	Not significant
Child feels part of the family	Not significant	Not significant
How settled the child is	Not significant	Not significant
How well the child is going at the moment	Not significant	Not significant
Child's connection with their birth family members		
Quality of birth family relationships:		
Mother	Not significant	Not significant
Father	Not significant	Not significant
Siblings	Significant	Not significant
Maternal grandparents	Not significant	Not significant
Paternal grandparents	Not significant	Not significant
Family time		
Mother	Significant	Not significant
Father	Not significant	Not significant
Siblings	Not significant	Not significant
Maternal grandparents	Significant	Not significant
Paternal grandparents	Not significant	Not significant

5 Discussion

This report investigated whether children who transitioned to guardianship orders differ in their experiences and perceptions about relationships that would help them to achieve relational permanency over time from children who remained in OOHC relative/kinship care. Embedded in attachment theory, this study adopted a framework of relational permanency that encompassed multiple aspects of the child's relationships with their carers/guardians and birth family members. These factors impact a child's connection to family, sense of belonging and, most importantly, felt security. Therefore, relational permanency was examined over time on four relationship dimensions: the carer's commitment and engagement, the child's perceived sense of belonging, the child's relationship with the members of the caregiving household, and the child's connection to birth family members. The results from the analyses on these dimensions are discussed below.

5.1 Experiences and perceptions influencing relational permanency

Carer's commitment and engagement

Compared to the children who remained in relative/kinship care, the children from the transitioned guardians cohort did not fare significantly better (or worse) on the post-guardianship outcomes related to carer's' commitment and engagement. In other words, guardianship orders were not associated with improved carer's' positive parenting style in the short to medium term – that is, three to four years – following the legal orders. However, it is noteworthy that both groups of children were in the care of a relative or member of their kinship network – whether in OOHC or under a guardianship order. Being a relative/kin carer brings with it the family value and feeling of responsibility, of taking care of your own; having a family connection brings about a strong commitment and engagement with a member of your own family or community. This may partly explain why both groups of relative/kinship carers are similar in terms of commitment and engagement. Furthermore, unlike the new guardians, the transitioned guardians did not go through suitability assessment or receive pre-guardianship casework support regarding positive parenting which may have contributed to the lack of difference. Future research should look into new guardians' commitment and engagement to assess whether suitability assessment and casework support, pre-guardianship orders, can actually make a greater difference compared with carers' of children who remained in OOHC.

Carers of both groups of children reported high levels of warmth and low levels of hostility in their parenting style. They were also perceived by the children to be highly emotionally responsive. These results are consistent with previous research on the POCLS children (Cashmore & Taylor, 2020), which showed that relative/kinship carers were reported to

be high in emotional responsiveness and parental warmth and low in hostility. Nevertheless, such findings are promising and future waves of the POCLS data would be useful to better understand the positive impacts of parental warmth and responsiveness in developing trusting and secure attachments between the children and their guardians the longer term.

Child's relationships with members of the caregiving household

Children's relationships with the primary and secondary carers showed positive results. The children on guardianship orders were more likely to have improved relationships with their guardians in the medium term (Wave 4) than children who remained in relative/kinship care. This finding was expected and is important because it demonstrates that children on guardianship orders can achieve enduring relationships with their carer/guardian over time.

However, children on guardianship orders did not do better or worse in terms of their relationship with other members of the carer household across waves compared to those who remained in relative/kinship care. Although both groups of children enjoyed a high level of felt security, warmth and loving relationships, this finding may suggest a need to provide these families with post-permanency support to build skills in establishing long-term loving, enduring and caring relationships with the child they care for. Such relationships between the guardianship children and the members of their permanent family are vital in order for these children to live and grow in a positive family environment.

Perceived sense of belonging

Across waves, a sizeable majority of children from both groups (80%) reported that their carer always helped them feel part of the family and were very happy in their current placement. Similarly, across waves, a sizeable majority of carers (80%) from both groups reported that their children were very well settled. These results support those of Cashmore and Taylor (2020).

However, children from the transitioned guardians cohort did not differ significantly from the children in relative/kinship care on any of those indicators comprising their perceived sense of belonging. This finding is not expected and shows that for the transitioned guardians cohort, legally permanent orders did not necessarily result in children experiencing a greater sense of belonging, at least in the short to medium term. The lack of difference, however could be attributed to the fact that: a) it takes a long time for children recovering from the effects of trauma to develop a greater sense of belonging which is not merely a function of legally permanent orders; and b) other elements/aspects of children's experiences of relationships also need to work in tandem towards the attainment of higher sense of belonging. Therefore, it is necessary to caution against drawing the conclusion that guardianship orders did not help improve children's sense of belonging. Future waves of the POCLS data will be useful in establishing the longer term impact of guardianship orders on children's sense of belonging.

Child's connection with their birth family

In regard to connection with birth family members, children from the transitioned guardians cohort fared better than their counterparts in the short term but not in the medium term. Children on guardianship orders were more likely to have good relationships with their siblings who they were not living with in the short term compared to children who remained in relative/kinship care. It is also noteworthy that, of children on guardianship orders at Wave 3 who had a good relationship with siblings, 63.5% were placed with siblings compared to 58.8% of the relative/kinship group. More research is needed to ascertain whether co-placement with siblings has influenced these results.

Similarly, in terms of contact with birth family members, children on guardianship orders were more likely to have frequent contact with their birth mother and maternal grandparents right after exiting to guardianship than the other group of children. This is a positive result – at least in the short term – as it suggests that the guardians were facilitating contact, thereby supporting the child's connection with their birth family. However, these gains were not sustained in the medium term. This may be an opportunity for DCJ to engage in assisting guardians to better manage family time between the child and their birth family members.

5.2 Limitations and implications for future research

Limitations

This study is subject to the same limitations that have been discussed in Research Reports 24-2 and 24-3, including a lack of generalisability of the findings to all children in OOHC and to all children who transitioned to permanency via guardianship orders. The guardianship cohort used in this sample was not representative of the guardianship population in NSW because it consisted of 'transitioned guardians'. As discussed earlier, transitioned guardians are the cohort arising from the early extension of guardianship orders in 2014 and is comprised of relative/kinship carers who, at the time, had full Permanent Responsibility to Relative (PRR). This analysis has excluded foster carers who became guardians after 29 October 2014; that is, 'new guardians' who were subject to permanency planning assessment. It is therefore important to apply caution when interpreting the findings of this report given that the transitioned guardians did not go through the suitability assessment process like the new guardians.

In addition, given that there were only a small number of children who changed households (carers) between Waves 2, 3 and 4, this analysis did not consider placement changes and length of time with a particular carer, which might have affected the quality of relationships between the child and the carer. Furthermore, the qualitative aspects of children's relationships were absent in the analysis. The report did not include qualitative data regarding children's experiences and perceptions about their relationships which could have complemented the quantitative analysis of this report in a meaningful way.

Implications for future research

As this is the first exploratory research on relational permanency of the first group of children who exited OOHC on guardianship orders – the transitioned guardians cohort – using four waves of POCLS data, it provides baseline information for future research to build on. Researchers considering both the transitioned and new guardians cohort may look into such questions as:

- How does relational permanency impact children's outcomes in the health, socio-emotional and cognitive domains?
- To what extent do children who achieve legal permanency sustain and maintain nurturing relationships with carers/guardians/birth family members into adulthood?

In addition, future research on relational permanency should include aspects of cultural permanency as well as qualitative studies to understand the lived experience of these children and guardians so that such insights can help us to better understand the findings from quantitative analysis.

5.3 Implications for policy and practice²⁷

Legal permanency, such as guardianship, aims to promote a safe and stable living arrangement for a child and is shown to be significantly associated with an improved relationship between the children and their guardians over time. This is an important finding that supports one of the primary goals of permanency planning: to achieve a robust and long-term bond between the child and the caring adult, that is, their guardian. However, despite such a promising finding, the fact that the children's connections to their birth families did not seem to improve in the medium term was disappointing. Keeping in mind that unlike the new guardians, transitioned guardians did not receive pre-guardianship casework support, this finding suggests an opportunity for DCJ to assist transitioned guardians to better manage children's relationships with birth family members by providing post-permanency support services including counselling and information sessions. Additionally, transitioned guardians can be supported to plan and manage positive, meaningful and effective family time, which will help the children to strengthen relationships with their birth family members.

Taking together the findings of this report and the two previous ones (Report 24-2 and 24-3), the results are mixed. It is found that guardianship is not significantly associated with improved socio-emotional wellbeing and non-verbal cognitive ability of the children. Although guardianship is significantly associated with better verbal cognitive functioning for the children in the short term, the difference is small and of little practical significance. Nevertheless, there is evidence that guardianship is linked to a better relationship

²⁷ Practice implications are specific to the transitioned guardians cohort only.

between the children and their carers/guardians compared to children who remained in long-term OOHC.

6 Conclusion

This study adds to the scant literature on the relational permanency of children exiting the OOHC system through guardianship orders. Given the importance of relational permanency in achieving favourable outcomes for children who experience OOHC, it is imperative to better understand various aspects of these children's experiences and perceptions that promote relational permanency. Future waves of the POCLS data can provide better insights into the long-term relationships of this cohort and the children from the new guardian's cohort.

7 References

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8 Appendix

8.1 Variables from the POCLS data set used in the analysis

- ROSH reports for neglect (RI_NEGLECT_A)
- Co-placement with siblings (COPLACED_SIBLING)
- Carer psychological distress was assessed using the K10 (CH_CRR_K10CUT).
- Parental warmth (RC_CRR_CARER_WARMSCORE)
- Parental hostility (RC_CRR_CARER_HOSTSCORE)
- Carer's emotional responsiveness RC_CYP_PSI_EMOT
- Are you happy living here? (RC_CYP_HAPPYLIVE)
- How often the adults looking after you: Help you feel part of the family (RC_CYP_PARTFAM)
- How well carer interviewed feels they know the child? (IN_CRR_CARER1_KNOW)
- Do you feel settled where you live now? (RC_CYP_SETTLELIVE_NOW)
- Overall, how carer interviewed thinks the child is going at the moment (IN_CRR_CARER1_GOING)
- How settled is the SC now? (IN_CRR_SETTLE_NOW)
- Child's relationship with other children in the household (IN_CRR_CHILD_RELN)
- Child's relationship with the primary carer (IN_CRR_CARER1_RELN)
- Child's relationship with the secondary carer (IN_CRR_CARER2_RELN)
- Relationship between the child and father (FC_CRR_RELN_FATHER)
- Relationship between the child and mother (FC_CRR_RELN_MOTHER)
- Relationship between the child and maternal grandparents (FC_CRR_RELN_MGRND)
- Relationship between the child and paternal grandparents (FC_CRR_RELN_PGRND)
- Relationship between the child and siblings (FC_CRR_RELN_SIBLING)
- Frequency of contact with family member – Mother (FC_CRR_CONT_MOTH_N)
- Frequency of contact with family member – Father (FC_CRR_CONT_FATH_N)
- Frequency of contact with family member – Maternal Grandparents (FC_CRR_CONT_MGRAND_N)

- Frequency of contact with family member – Paternal Grandparents (FC_CRR_CONT_PGRAND_N)
- Frequency of contact with family member – siblings (FC_CRR_CONT_SIB_N)

8.2 Additional results on carer's commitment and engagement

Table 12: Multiple regression models of post-guardianship emotional responsiveness scores

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard-ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard-ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Emotional responsiveness score at Wave 2	0.49	0.31–0.67	0.00*	0.128	-0.08–0.33	0.22
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.03	-1.53–1.58	0.97	-0.91	-2.72–0.89	0.35
ROSH report involving neglect (Yes/No)	1.71	-0.36–3.78	0.10	-1.45	-3.99–1.09	0.26
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	0.00	-0.06–0.06	0.99	0.02	-0.04–0.09	0.48
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.75	-2.47–0.96	0.38	-1.11	-3.07–0.85	0.26
K10 cut-off (high)	-0.18	-2.48–2.11	0.87	-0.15	-2.62–2.31	0.90

Note: For Wave 3 model: n=433, $R^2=0.25$, adjusted $R^2=0.21$; for Wave 4 model: n=433, $R^2=0.07$, adjusted $R^2=0.00$

Table 13: Multiple regression models of post-guardianship parental warmth scores

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Parental warmth score at Wave 2	0.41	0.31–0.51	0.00*	0.47	0.37–0.58	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.230	-0.70–0.24	0.33	0.29	-0.20–0.80	0.24
ROSH report involving neglect (Yes/No)	-0.535	-1.01– -0.05	0.03*	-0.51	-1.00– -0.01	0.04*
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.037	-0.05– -0.01	0.00*	-0.01	-0.02–0.00	0.26
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.267	-0.82–0.28	0.34	-0.22	-0.81–0.36	0.44
K10 cut-off (high)	-0.671	-1.44–0.10	0.08	-0.33	-1.20–0.53	0.44

Note: For Wave 3 model: n=433, $R^2=0.29$, adjusted $R^2=0.28$; for Wave 4 model: n=433, $R^2=0.26$, adjusted $R^2=0.25$

Table 14: Multiple regression models of post-guardianship parental hostility scores

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Parental hostility score at Wave 2	0.48	0.39–0.58	0.00*	0.50	0.38–0.61	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.02	-0.70–0.64	0.93	-0.77	-1.58–0.03	0.06
ROSH report involving neglect (Yes/No)	-0.94	-1.62– -0.25	0.00*	-0.93	-1.72– -0.13	0.02*
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	0.04	0.01–0.07	0.00*	0.03	0.00–0.07	0.02*
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	1.45	0.65–2.25	0.00*	0.43	-0.52–1.38	0.37
K10 cut-off (high)	2.71	1.56–3.85	0.00*	0.98	-0.46–2.43	0.18

Note: For Wave 3 model: n=433, R²=0.43, adjusted R²=0.42; for Wave 4 model: n=433, R²=0.32 adjusted R²=0.25

8.3 Additional results on relationships with members of the caregiving household

Table 15: Binary regression models of post-guardianship child–primary carer relationship

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Relationship with primary carer at Wave 2	1.33	1.83–7.74	0.00*	1.98	3.27–15.94	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.03	0.48–1.95	0.94	0.89	1.05–5.69	0.03*
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	-1.37	0.09–0.68	0.00*	-0.43	0.28–1.46	0.29
CBCL Externalising Problems cut-off at Wave 2 (borderline), ref (normal)	-0.83	0.14–1.31	0.14	-1.25	0.08–0.96	0.04*
CBCL Externalising Problems cut-off at Wave 2 (clinical), ref (normal)	-1.37	0.12–0.52	0.00*	-0.54	0.26–1.28	0.18
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	0.17	0.52–2.67	0.68	-0.27	0.33–1.74	0.52
K10 cut-off (high)	-1.06	0.15–0.79	0.01*	-0.70	0.19–1.29	0.15

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke $R^2=0.30$, $n=411$; Wave 4 model $n=374$, Nagelkerke $R^2=0.27$. Note that the models presented here used CBCL Externalising cut-off (categorical variable) to adjust for Hosmer-Lemshow test.

Table 16: Binary regression models of post-guardianship child–secondary carer relationship

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Relationship with secondary carer at Wave 2	2.28	4.25–22.70	0.00*	1.98	3.07–17.04	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.73	0.88–4.89	0.09	0.21	0.62–2.47	0.54
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	-1.15	0.11–0.88	0.02	0.07	0.53–2.19	0.83
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.00	0.96–1.02	0.86	0.01	0.98–1.04	0.36
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	0.27	0.53–3.29	0.55	-0.17	0.39–1.82	0.66
K10 cut-off (high)	-1.20	0.08–1.08	0.06	-0.22	0.19–3.23	0.75

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.36, n=259; Wave 4 model n=225, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.15

Table 17: Binary regression models of post-guardianship child–other children’s relationship

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Relationship with other children at Wave 2	1.60	2.46–9.99	0.00*	1.44	2.08–8.67	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.46	0.77–3.28	0.20	0.360	0.79–2.58	0.22
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	-0.44	0.28–1.45	0.28	-0.168	0.47–1.53	0.58
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.03	0.93–0.98	0.00*	-0.02	0.96–0.99	0.02*
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.58	0.26–1.18	0.13	-0.01	0.51–1.91	0.97
K10 cut-off (high)	-1.02	0.15–0.84	0.02*	-0.26	0.29–1.99	0.58

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.33, n= 323; Wave 4 model n=284, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.18

8.4 Additional results on perceived sense of belonging

Table 18: Child's report on 'how often the carer make you feel part of the family': post-guardianship binary regression models

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard-ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard-ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Carer made you feel part of the family at Wave 2	1.37	1.15–13.63	0.02*	0.89	0.74–8.08	0.14
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.05	0.30–3.72	0.93	-0.53	0.18–1.90	0.37
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	1.75	1.38–24.15	0.01*	-0.34	0.12–4.01	0.70
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.02	0.93–1.01	0.18	0.02	0.98–1.07	0.24
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.35	0.19–2.49	0.58	-0.43	0.19–2.19	0.48
K10 cut-off (high)	-1.05	0.07–1.63	0.18	-0.13	0.14–5.19	0.88

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.21, n=101; Wave 4 model n=87, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.17

Table 19: Child's report on 'how happy the feel living here': post-guardianship binary regression models

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Feel happy living here at Wave 2	0.93	0.75–8.56	0.13	1.87	1.89–22.29	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.84	0.14–1.28	0.13	0.01	0.26–3.82	0.98
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	-0.45	0.11–3.64	0.61	-0.56	0.05–5.69	0.63
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.01	0.94–1.02	0.54	0.01	0.96–1.06	0.52
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	0.76	0.58–7.90	0.24	-0.68	0.12–2.06	0.34
K10 cut-off (high)	-0.03	0.19–4.76	0.96	-0.44	0.11–3.41	0.60

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.10, n=97; Wave 4 model n=85, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.17

Table 20: Carers' report on 'how settled the child is': post-guardianship binary regression models

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
How settled the child is (very/not very settled)	1.82	2.71–14.16	0.00*	1.20	1.52–7.35	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.74	0.92–4.77	0.07	0.51	0.83–3.36	0.15
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.29	0.62–2.89	0.45	0.41	0.80–2.84	0.20
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.05	0.92–0.97	0.00*	-0.01	0.95–1.00	0.12
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	0.16	0.49–2.85	0.70	-0.39	0.33–1.37	0.27
K10 cut-off (high)	-1.53	0.09–0.51	0.00*	-0.94	0.15–0.95	0.04*

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.37, $n=411$; Wave 4 model $n=373$, Nagelkerke $R^2=0.14$

Table 21: Carers' report on 'how well the child is going': post-guardianship binary regression models

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
How well the child is going (very/not very well) at Wave 2	0.26	0.60–2.76	0.50	0.72	0.98–4.32	0.05
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.29	0.78–2.30	0.28	0.42	0.91–2.56	0.10
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	-0.12	0.51–1.53	0.66	0.17	0.72–1.95	0.48
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.06	0.91–0.95	0.00*	-0.03	0.94–0.98	0.00*
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.51	0.33–1.07	0.08	0.09	0.60–1.97	0.76
K10 cut-off (high)	-1.18	0.14–0.65	0.00*	-0.64	0.22–1.20	0.12

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.30, n=410; Wave 4 model n=374, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.16

8.5 Additional results on quality of relationships with birth family members

Table 22: Binary regression models of post-guardianship relationship (good) with mother

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Good relationship with mother at Wave 2	0.48	1.03–2.55	0.03*	1.81	3.72–10.21	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.33	0.86–2.25	0.16	-0.05	0.55–1.62	0.95
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.20	0.75–2.01	0.41	-0.05	0.55–1.62	0.84
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.02	0.96–0.99	0.02*	-0.03	0.95–0.99	0.00*
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.59	0.30–1.00	0.05	0.53	0.92–3.17	0.09
K10 cut-off (high)	-0.57	0.23–1.34	0.19	-0.12	0.31–2.44	0.80

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.07, n=388; Wave 4 model n=354, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.24

Table 23: Binary regression models of post-guardianship relationship (good) with father

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Good relationship with father at Wave 2	2.39	6.47–18.45	0.00*	2.36	6.08–18.49	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.03	0.59–1.79	0.90	0.05	0.59–1.87	0.86
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	-0.08	0.52–1.63	0.78	-0.29	0.41–1.32	0.31
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.02	0.95–0.99	0.03*	0.00	0.98–1.02	0.77
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.05	0.47–1.89	0.88	0.25	0.64–2.56	0.46
K10 cut-off (high)	-0.06	0.34–2.49	0.89	-1.09	0.08–1.31	0.11

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.35, n=388; Wave 4 model n=354, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.33

Table 24: Binary regression models of post-guardianship relationship (good) with siblings

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Good relationship with sibling at Wave 2	2.14	5.24–13.79	0.00*	1.45	2.68–6.89	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.53	1.01–2.85	0.04*	0.09	0.65–1.82	0.72
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.12	0.67–1.91	0.64	0.39	0.89–2.44	0.12
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	0.02	1.00–1.04	0.02*	0.00	0.98–1.01	0.96
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	0.42	0.85–2.77	0.15	0.81	1.25–4.06	0.00*
K10 cut-off (high)	0.06	0.47–2.42	0.86	-0.01	0.41–2.33	0.97

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.30, n=388; Wave 4 model n=354, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.19

Table 25: Binary regression models of post-guardianship relationship (good) with maternal grandparents

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Good relationship with maternal grandparents at Wave 2	2.72	8.98–25.99	0.00*	1.58	2.98–7.95	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.14	0.66–2.01	0.60	0.11	0.65–1.90	0.68
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.13	0.64–2.03	0.63	-0.08	0.54–1.56	0.75
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	0.01	0.99–1.03	0.30	0.00	0.98–1.02	0.77
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	0.04	0.55–1.97	0.89	0.24	0.70–2.31	0.42
K10 cut-off (high)	-0.94	0.14–1.03	0.05	-0.34	0.25–2.00	0.51

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.40, n=388; Wave 4 model n=354, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.18

Table 26: Binary regression models of post-guardianship relationship (good) with paternal grandparents

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Good relationship with paternal grandparents at Wave 2	2.83	9.78–29.92	0.00*	1.74	3.38–9.62	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.23	0.69–2.32	0.44	0.29	0.76–2.37	0.31
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.13	0.61–2.13	0.67	0.28	0.74–2.37	0.34
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	0.00	0.98–1.03	0.51	-0.01	0.96–1.01	0.36
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.90	0.18–0.88	0.02*	0.17	0.61–2.29	0.60
K10 cut-off (high)	-0.23	0.30–2.03	0.62	-0.20	0.29–2.27	0.69

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.40, n=388; Wave 4 model n=354, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.19

8.6 Additional results on family time arrangements (contact) with birth family

Table 27: Binary regression models of post-guardianship frequency of contact with mother (at least weekly vs at least monthly)

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Frequency of contact with mother at Wave 2 (at least weekly vs at least monthly)	2.98	7.52–52.25	0.00*	2.29	3.74–26.3	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	1.35	1.66–9.02	0.00*	0.36	0.60–3.42	0.41
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.99	1.01–7.13	0.04*	0.28	0.51–3.40	0.56
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.01	0.95–1.02	0.50	-0.01	0.95–1.01	0.40
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	0.68	0.81–4.83	0.13	1.12	1.24–7.59	0.01*
K10 cut-off (high)	-18.88	0.00-	0.99	0.08	0.12–9.58	0.94

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.39, $n=252$; Wave 4 model $n=193$, Nagelkerke $R^2=0.25$

Table 28: Binary regression models of post-guardianship frequency of contact with father (at least weekly vs at least monthly)

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Frequency of contact with father at Wave 2 (at least weekly vs at least monthly)	1.04	1.01–8.01	0.04*	1.78	1.96–18.10	0.00*
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.03	0.38–2.42	0.94	0.12	0.41–3.11	0.80
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.49	0.56–4.79	0.36	-0.54	0.21–1.60	0.29
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	0.00	0.96–1.03	0.99	0.01	0.97–1.05	0.52
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.12	0.29–2.64	0.82	-1.80	0.02–1.37	0.09
K10 cut-off (high)	-0.38	0.07–5.98	0.72	1.78	0.33–105.40	0.22

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.05, $n=170$; Wave 4 model $n=134$, Nagelkerke $R^2=0.19$

Table 29: Binary regression models of post-guardianship frequency of contact with sibling (at least weekly vs at least monthly)

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Frequency of contact with sibling at Wave 2 (at least weekly vs at least monthly)	3.03	6.54–66.72	0.00	1.16	0.92–11.23	0.06
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	0.56	0.52–5.97	0.36	0.36	0.41–5.00	0.57
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.57	0.42–7.36	0.43	0.87	0.47–12.19	0.29
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	0.00	0.95–1.04	0.93	0.01	0.96–1.06	0.62
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	0.76	0.64–7.17	0.21	0.99	0.79–9.10	0.11
K10 cut-off (high)	0.29	0.18–9.48	0.77	1.50	0.84–24.14	0.07

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.39, n=142; Wave 4 model n=121, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.15.

Table 30: Binary regression models of post-guardianship frequency of contact with maternal grandparents (at least weekly vs at least monthly)

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Frequency of contact with maternal grandparents at Wave 2 (at least weekly vs at least monthly)	3.23	5.33–120.09	0.00*	0.90	0.55–11.00	0.23
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	1.93	1.14–42.04	0.03*	0.32	0.30–6.23	0.67
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	0.90	0.42–14.42	0.31	-0.20	0.19–3.47	0.78
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	-0.02	0.91–1.02	0.31	0.00	0.95–1.05	0.93
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-0.04	0.12–7.21	0.96	-1.21	0.03–2.99	0.30
K10 cut-off (high)	-17.94	0.00–	0.99	-19.6	0.00–	0.00*

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.53, n=73; Wave 4 model n=59, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.14.

Table 31: Binary regression models of post-guardianship frequency of contact with paternal grandparents (at least weekly vs at least monthly)

Variables	Wave 3			Wave 4		
	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.	Unstandard- ised coefficient B	95% CI	Sig.
Frequency of contact with paternal grandparents at Wave 2 (at least weekly vs at least monthly)	3.84	3.49–619.76	0.00*	20.67	0.00–	0.99
Group (guardianship vs kinship)	-0.26	0.11–5.31	0.79	-16.92	0.00–	0.99
ROSH reported issues for neglect (Y/N)	1.23	0.26–44.67	0.34	35.99	0.00–	0.99
CBCL Externalising Problems Score at Wave 2	0.00	0.93–1.07	0.98	0.00	0.83–1.21	0.96
K10 cut-off (low)	-	-	-	-	-	-
K10 cut-off (moderate)	-19.49	0.00–	0.99	-16.29	0.00–	0.99
K10 cut-off (high)	-1.56	0.01–4.31	0.20	-37.98	0.00–	0.99

Note: For Wave 3 model, Nagelkerke R^2 0.46, n=63; Wave 4 model n=49, Nagelkerke R^2 =0.59.