Foundations

What Works Centre for Children & Families

UNDERSTANDING RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR CHILDREN IN CARE IN ENGLAND

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FOUNDATIONS: WHAT WORKS CENTRE FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Foundations was formed through the merger of What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC) and the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)

OUR WORK WITH THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

As part of our remit to create and promote evidence-based practice in children's social care, we provided research support to the review:

- Producing and commissioning evidence summaries and rapid reviews in areas of interest
- Conducting new research and analysis in priority areas

We also supported with the Review's engagement work by exploring topics and gathering social workers' views via our social worker polling

UNDERSTANDING RESIDENTIAL CARE: AN ANALYSIS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

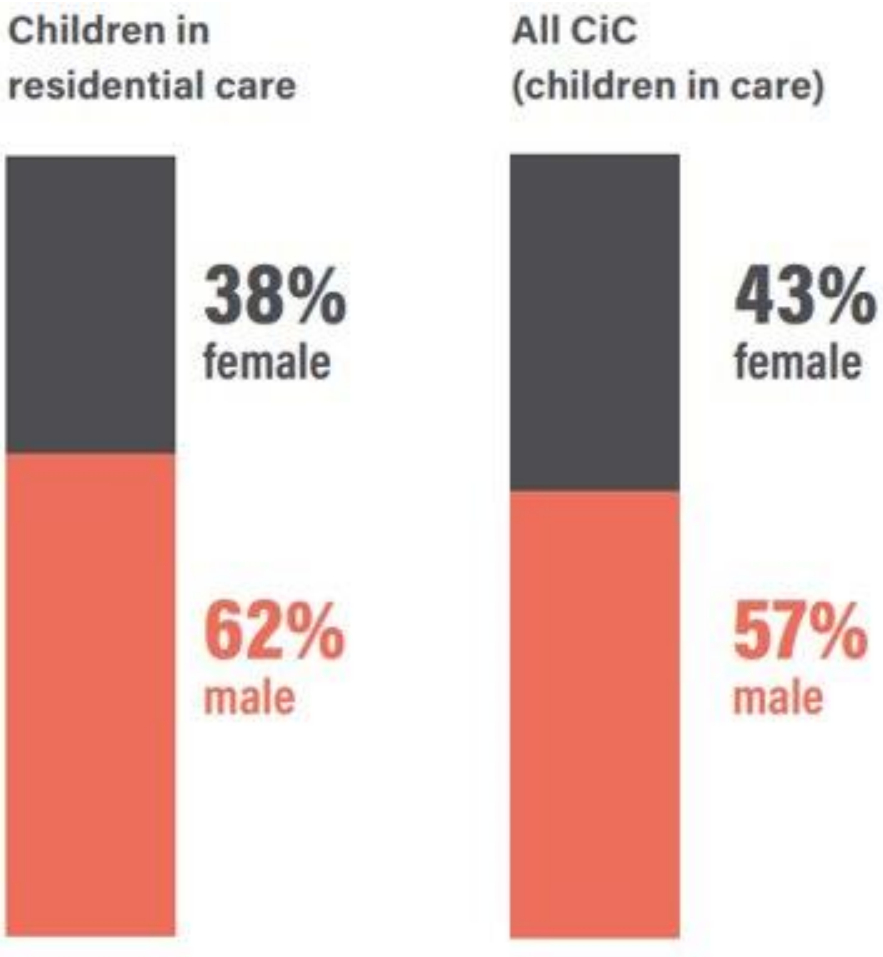
Aims: To analyse national administrative data to provide a picture of children who experience residential care

- Provide an overview of the **demographic** characteristics of children who experience residential care
- Outline the **pathways** of children before and after entering residential care
- Determine the **characteristics** associated with being placed in residential care
- Describe the **outcomes** for children who have lived in residential care

This analysis only looks at the experiences of children living in **children's homes subject to children's home regulations**, which we refer to as "residential care" throughout.

WHICH GROUPS OF CHILDREN IN CARE ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY REPRESENTED IN RESIDENTIAL CARE PLACEMENTS?

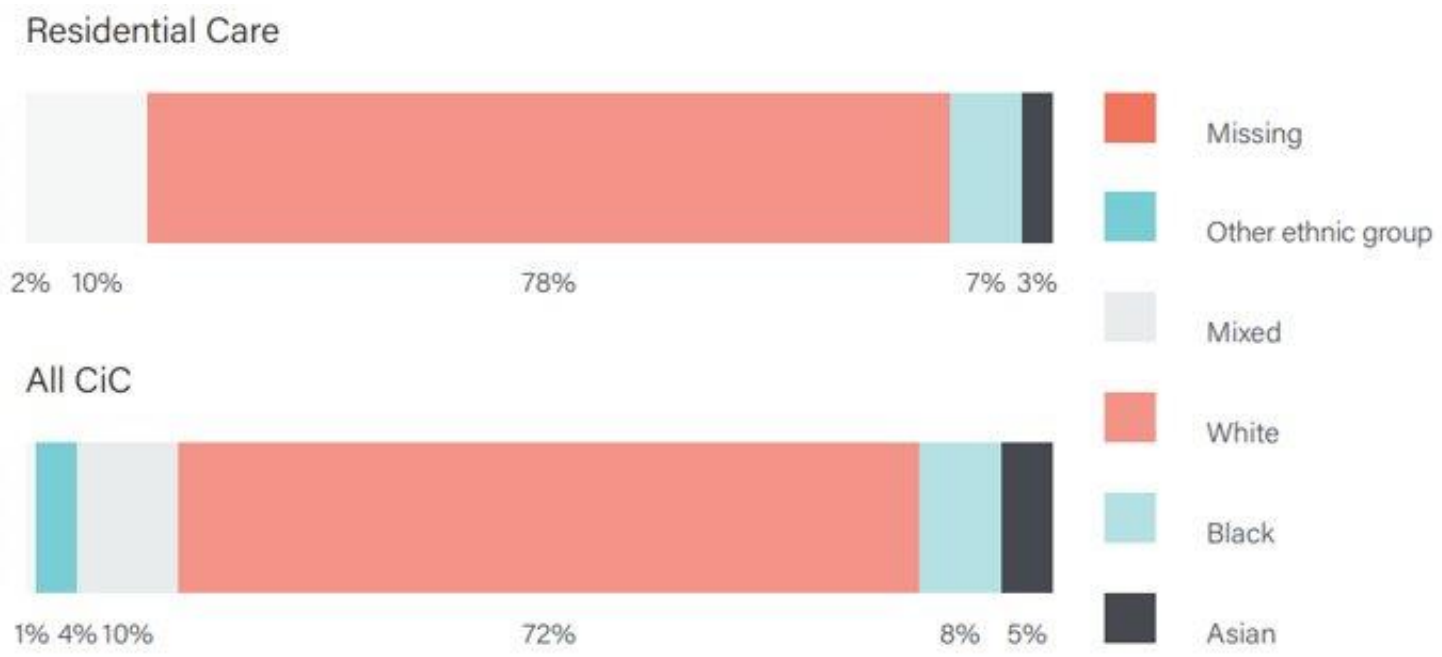
GENDER



KEY FINDING:

Girls are less likely to than boys to enter residential care

ETHNICITY



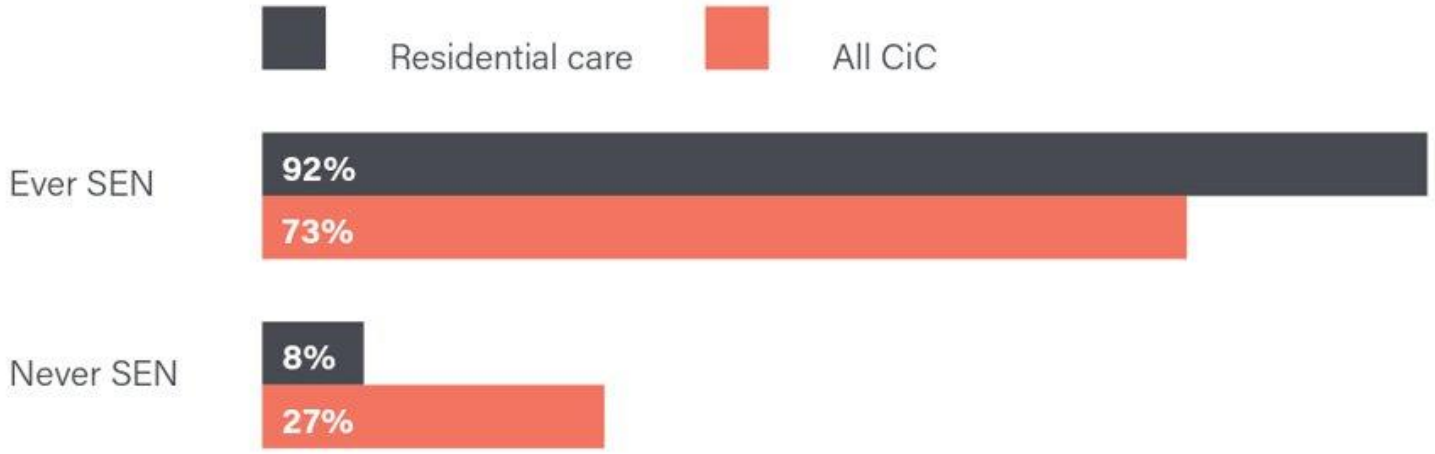
KEY FINDINGS:

Minority ethnic groups are underrepresented in residential care

Compared to White children:

- Asian children are estimated as 26% less likely to experience a residential care placement in their first period of care
- Black children are estimated as 29% less likely

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)



KEY FINDINGS:

Children placed into residential care **have high levels of need**, with 92% reported as receiving SEN provision at some point

Children who enter care due to a disability/illness are overrepresented in residential care

WHAT ARE THE CARE JOURNEYS FOR CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE RESIDENTIAL CARE LIKE?

JOURNEYS INTO RESIDENTIAL CARE

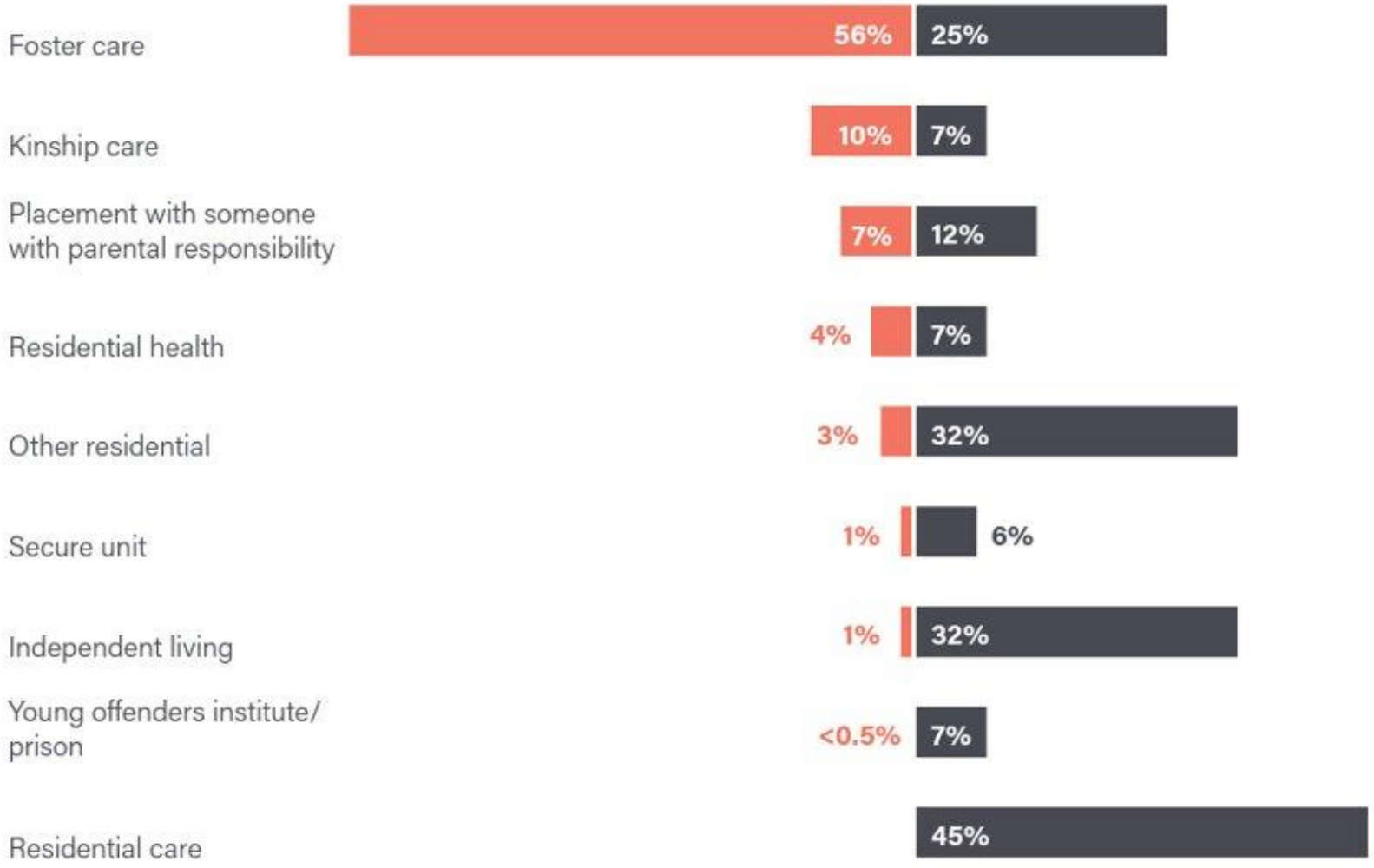
High placement instability before entering: On average, children spent 2.2 years and had 2.2 placements between entering care and entering residential care

Instability in school: Over a third of children had a fixed term exclusion in the year before their first residential care placement

Large differences across groups: Children can have very different experiences before entering care depending on age, reason for requiring services etc.

Across childhood, those with experience of residential care had an average of 6.7 placements during their time in care

TYPES OF PLACEMENTS BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIRST RESIDENTIAL CARE PLACEMENT



KEY FINDINGS:

Foster care and kinship care options seem to be explored more before children are placed in residential care, with over half of children experiencing a foster placement beforehand.

Instability once placed into residential care is common. Children have an average of **over 3 further placements** and often experience **multiple residential care placements**

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE RESIDENTIAL CARE

Note: our analysis only describes outcomes for children who have lived in residential care – it does not imply that outcomes are caused by the residential care placement

OUTCOMES

Placement experiences: 61% have been recorded as missing from care between the ages of 14-17 years and around a quarter have been convicted while in care

Wellbeing: High SDQ scores and around a quarter reported as having a substance misuse problem while in care

Care leaver outcomes: Most (92%) lived in accommodation deemed ‘suitable’, however over half were NEET at age 18

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Absences: Mean rate of unauthorized absences at KS4 was 13%

Exclusions: Almost a third had a fixed term exclusion during KS4 – higher than among all children in care, but lower than the rate before residential care

Attainment: Lower Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores compared to all children in care, only 1% obtained the national average Attainment 8 score and 7% obtained the average score for children with SEN

LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Limitations

- Administrative data
- Narrow focus of residential care
- Non-causal analysis - we did not determine an 'effect' of these placements

Conclusions

- **High level of need and vulnerability**
- **Trends around under/over representation of demographic groups require further research**
- **Interventions should be evaluated to improve stability and outcomes for those who experience residential care**
- **The journeys are diverse, and any future research should consider sub-groups within the population**

ONGOING RESEARCH: EVALUATION OF STAYING CLOSE

- The Staying Close programme provides **support for young people leaving residential care**
- It provides support in finding **accommodation**, and **practical and emotional support** to help develop confidence and skills for independent living, as well as improve emotional health and wellbeing
- This is provided by a member of staff from their former children's home or another **professional who they know and trust**

THANK YOU!