Title
Health in kinship families

Supervisor/s
Helen Minnis and Rory O’Connor

Outline
When children are separated from their families, usually because of abuse or neglect, some will move to live with extended family members. This is described as Kinship Care. Many of these arrangements are informal (e.g. “gran” or a sibling takes over the care without any statutory involvement), so that we do not have accurate information about kinship families and, in particular, we know little about their health needs. These families are disproportionately likely to live in poverty and the rates of long-term illness and disability among kinship carers is thought to be much higher than in the general population. A recent study of 80 kinship families found that 43% of children had a physical health problem, and over a third had symptoms of a mental health problem. In order to help with future service design for this vulnerable population, this PhD aims to identify the number of children who are living in kinship care in Scotland, and examine how their and their carer’s physical and mental health compares to the rest of the population.

Study aim
To identify kinship families and assess their health needs

Research methods
This mixed methods study will use the Scottish Health Survey, a dataset including 37,000 individuals including 8,000 children under the age of 16, detailed information is available about family/household composition that will allow identification of the numbers of kinship families. These data will then be linked with routinely collected NHS data on physical and mental health. In depth qualitative interviews will be carried out with 20 kinship families to identify key challenges.

References (maximum 3)