

The Cost of Loving: Annual survey of kinship carers 2022

Sam Turner

October 2022



Contents

Foreword	3
from the Kinship advisory group	
Foreword	4
from Dr Lucy Peake, Chief Executive	
Executive Summary	5
Recommendations	7
The Cost of Loving - full report	9
Survey Findings	
Section A	
About the children	12
Section B	
About the carers	17
Section C	
Health	26
Section D	
Education	29
Section E	
Behaviour	31
Section F	
Finances	32
Section G	
Local authority support	37
Section H	
Independent review of children's social care	42
Conclusion	44
Recommendations	45
About Kinship	46
References	47

Foreword

from the Kinship Advisory Group

The Cost of Loving, based on the responses from Kinship's 2022 annual survey, demonstrates the great lengths which kinship carers go to in order to provide safe and loving homes for children when their parents are unable to.

However, it crucially shows too how children and their carers are being let down by a system which isn't set up to support them. Too few are getting the help they need from their local authorities, in education or in health, or to cope with the deepening cost-of-living crisis.

As the advisory group for Kinship, we all have first-hand experience of being kinship carers. We know there's a cost to doing the right thing, that there's a cost involved in loving a child – financially, practically and emotionally – and providing them with the stability they need to heal and thrive in kinship care.

We see how Kinship's programmes and services are making an enormous difference for families and we are proud to lend our expertise to support this vital work, but it isn't enough on its own. This report makes a compelling case for the government and local authorities to step up too, just as thousands of family members and friends do each year, to ensure children remain in well-supported kinship arrangements with someone who loves and cares for them. And that's why we're campaigning with Kinship for long overdue change as part of the #ValueOurLove campaign.

"...behind every data table or chart, we must remember the individual stories and experiences of kinship carers and their children who have for too long felt invisible."

The pages which follow include a number of stark and worrying statistics which highlight the significant challenges facing thousands of kinship families across England and Wales. However, behind every data table or chart, we must remember the individual stories and experiences of kinship carers and their children who have for too long felt invisible. Each percentage or count masks hundreds or even thousands of varied experiences – of joy and celebration, as well as struggle and loss. It is time for the collective voices of kinship carers to be listened to and acted upon, not silenced or ignored.

Foreword

from Dr Lucy Peake, Chief Executive

The news at the moment continues to be dominated by stories of individuals, families and communities across the country who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. For many kinship families this is exacerbating the significant hardship they were already experiencing. They know all too well that there's not only a cost of living, but a cost of loving too.

Earlier this year, we published our 2022 financial allowances survey report which highlighted the financial insecurity facing many kinship carers, and their concerns for the health and wellbeing of themselves and their children. *The Cost of Loving*, based on the results from our more recent 2022 annual survey of kinship carers this year, illustrates that the picture for thousands of kinship families across England and Wales remains deeply concerning.

The results in the pages which follow show that the changes we've been campaigning for are needed now more than ever. Too many families are not getting the support they need, and some carers are worried they may not be able to continue. This risks enormous costs, not just for the experiences and outcomes of children, but also financially for the state.

However, there is room for real optimism too. Finally, change feels within reach.

In May, the final report and recommendations of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England articulated a bold new vision for how we could support children within their family networks. It marked a significant recognition of what Kinship and kinship carers have long campaigned for, including stronger financial support, a right to paid leave and legal aid, access to peer support and training, and earlier identification of and support for kinship arrangements before crisis point. Many of these reflected key recommendations from our *Out of the Shadows* report, published in March,

which set out both the urgent changes needed now and longer-term reforms required to create a future fit for kinship care.

Across both England and Wales, we're seeing momentum for change build. More and more social care professionals, policy makers, and local authority leaders are working hard to bring about transformative reforms to policy and practice. In Westminster and the Senedd, a much wider group of politicians are visibly celebrating kinship families and pushing governments on their commitment to kinship carers and their children.

It's exciting – but we mustn't let up. We need to continue putting pressure on decision makers to listen and act upon what kinship families are telling us, and ensure the UK government responds confidently and positively to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care's recommendations. *The Cost of Loving* reflects part of our efforts at Kinship to continue building the evidence base on the need for change, centred on the voices and experiences of thousands of kinship carers across England and Wales.

That's why, together with kinship carers, we're excited to launch our new national campaign this October – #ValueOurLove. We're asking politicians to recognise and support the love which kinship carers provide for thousands of children, and act to ensure kinship families have the financial, practical and emotional support they need and deserve. The campaign will mobilise kinship carers to share their views and experiences, and push their governments to address the unfairness and inequality in the support available for kinship carers.

Over 162,000 children across England and Wales know the value of this love. Let's make sure it doesn't continue to go overlooked and undervalued.

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Kinship carers are the family members and friends who step up to care for children when their parents are unable to. Children in kinship care benefit from loving, stable family homes with carers who are dedicated to raising them into adulthood. However, kinship carers often face significant challenges due to their children's experiences and because of their own vulnerabilities, and most have very limited access to advice or financial, practical or emotional support.

The Cost of Loving is a report based on the findings of our 2022 annual survey, which explores what life is like for kinship carers in England and Wales. The survey allows us to learn about the issues that kinship carers face to better inform the delivery of support and services for kinship carers, and help shape recommendations for changes to policy and practice.

METHOD

The survey was developed using Form Assembly and was live from 12 July to 8 August 2022. The survey was promoted widely via Kinship's kinship carer community, social media, partner organisations, and our professionals and researchers networks. In total, the survey received 1,564 responses from kinship carers caring for 2,378 children in England and Wales.

KEY FINDINGS

Children growing up in kinship care often have high levels of need and experiences similar to other social care groups

54% of kinship carers told us that their child(ren) had experienced abuse or neglect before coming to live with them, similar levels to those children in need and in local authority care. The vast

majority of children had previous involvement with children's services. An overwhelming 98% of carers believed their child would have gone into local authority care if they had not stepped in to look after them.

Kinship carers and their children are struggling to access the health, educational and behavioural support they need

Children in kinship care were overrepresented in non-mainstream school and college settings, and half of those who attended any kind of educational setting had additional needs. 3 in 5 carers said their children had long-term physical or mental health needs, but only 30% had received a formal diagnosis. Over half of carers said their child had behaviours that were difficult to manage, and a quarter had experienced child-on-carer violence.

Very few children with additional needs do not require enhanced support in education. There is significant unmet demand for additional mental health support for children growing up in kinship care. Even where health, educational or behavioural support is being provided, kinship families are struggling to access this easily.

44% of carers said they themselves had a long-term health condition or disability. Just under a quarter were going without support despite there being a need. Only a very small proportion of carers (15%) had ever received therapeutic support to help them with their caring role.

Kinship families are experiencing financial insecurity and signs of financial stress are increasing

Only 2 in 5 kinship carers were in some form of employment, despite nearly 4 in 5 being of working age. The majority of carers – nearly 6 in 10

– said they did not always feel able to meet their children's needs in their current financial situation. Two thirds of carers received an allowance from their local authority to help them cover the costs of raising their children, but this changed significantly depending on legal order or lack thereof; only 4% of informal kinship carers received an allowance.

Nearly half of carers had given up work at some point to care for their child(ren) and over a quarter had converted space in their homes to act as an additional bedroom. 7 in 10 kinship carers had been forced to spend their savings or pension pots, and nearly 6 in 10 had borrowed money from friends or family, used credit cards for everyday purchases, or taken out a short-term loan in the past year to support with the costs of raising a child.

Measures of financial stress appear to be increasing and many carers are incredibly worried about the coming months. 4 in 10 carers reported skipping meals, using food banks or buying less food in the past year. 6 in 10 say they will avoid putting the heating on this winter, and over 4 in 10 say they will be forced to use their ovens less or will have fewer baths or showers to save on energy costs.

The provision of local authority support and information for kinship carers is inadequate, and this risks significant costs for children, families, and the state

78% of carers felt they did not receive the support they needed from their local authority in order to meet the needs of their kinship child(ren), an eight percentage point increase on last year's survey. Less than a third of carers received information about being a kinship carer before or shortly after the child moved in, and only 28% had been signposted to other places they could access support.

As many as 17% of carers had been unable to take on the care of a brother or sister to a child they already cared for due to a lack of space or financial worries. Most worryingly, over a third of carers said that the lack of support meant that they may have to stop caring for their child(ren) in the future. This was strongly associated with higher levels of financial insecurity.

CONCLUSION

This year's report is yet another illustration of the significant daily challenges facing kinship families and how existing policies and support services are completely insufficient to meet their needs. However, it too shows the difference which kinship care makes to the lives of children across the country and the joy and celebration of family life.

We also find ourselves at a time of significant opportunity for kinship care. Our recommendations make a strong and evidence-based case for how governments, local authorities and others can value the love of kinship carers and act with urgency to improve experiences and outcomes for the kinship families of today, as well as those of tomorrow.

Recommendations

1) All kinship carers should receive the financial support they need, when they need it.

This should include equalising the provision of financial allowances between foster carers and kinship carers, ensuring carers receive an allowance that matches the current minimum fostering allowance to help them cover the unexpected costs of raising a child. Emergency financial support should also be made available when a child moves in to help them cope with initial additional costs. No family should be forced to stop caring for a child or prevented from taking on the care of a sibling due to financial worries. Targeted support should be considered to help kinship families through the cost-of-living crisis and prevent family breakdowns.

2) Kinship carers should have a right to kinship care leave on a par with adoption leave.

This will ensure kinship carers do not have to leave employment if they don't need to and supports a choice based on the needs of the child, reducing risk of financial insecurity. This would ensure carers have the time and space to understand their options and support the child to settle in.

3) Children in kinship care should receive targeted support in education and health.

This should reflect the similar needs and experiences between kinship children and other groups of children supported by children's services. They should have a statutory right to a mental health assessment like looked after children, and access to health and therapeutic support which helps them understand their family circumstances and deal with the impact of abuse, trauma and loss. All kinship children should also be eligible for Pupil Premium Plus as well as support from the Virtual School and a designated teacher at their school.

4) Local authorities should provide significantly improved support and services for kinship carers.

This should aim to equalise access to training, preparation and other support between foster

carers and kinship carers, but with services attuned to the specific needs of kinship families. It should include health and therapeutic support for carers to help them manage their own challenges, and support to help them manage issues around children's behaviour and family contact. All kinship carers should understand where and how to access peer support in their local area, and be signposted to wider services including those provided by the voluntary sector and organisations including Kinship.

5) All kinship carers should receive free and independent advice and information.

This should be clear and accessible from the point at which they are considering becoming a kinship carer. Carers should also have a right to legal aid to support with navigating the family justice system.

6) Further research should seek to understand the needs and experiences of specific groups of kinship families whose voices are underrepresented.

This should include carers and children from Black and other minority ethnic backgrounds as a priority, as well as younger kinship carers, children and carers with additional caring responsibilities, and informal kinship carers. The views and experiences of these families should be clearly reflected in the delivery of services and policies for kinship carers and their children, and organisations should make additional efforts to reach those typically missing or ignored.

7) The UK government should respond boldly and positively to the recommendations made by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England.

Kinship carers want to see strong action on financial support in particular. Many of the recommendations mark a significant shift in how we could support children to grow up within their families, and the government should push forward urgently with these reforms to children's social care.

#ValueOurLove

Kinship has launched its first major campaign to highlight the crippling lack of support available for kinship families. The **#ValueOurLove** campaign celebrates the love between kinship carers and their children, and the irreplaceable impact this love has on children's lives.

Love gives children certainty; love reduces stress, anxiety and fear; love allows children to concentrate on schoolwork and build friendships; love grows confidence, self-esteem and happiness. Love means commitment to children, being there for them and supporting them as long as they need it. Every child needs love. That is why children do better when they are kept within their families.

Kinship is calling on the Government to act now to end the unfairness which risks children not being able to stay within their loving families and commit to four urgent changes so that kinship families are entitled to the same support as foster and adoptive families: We want to:

- 1 Equalise allowances between foster and kinship families:** All kinship families should receive the financial support they need, when they need it. This should include a financial allowance that matches the current minimum fostering allowance to help them cover the unexpected costs of caring for a child.
- 2 Equalise access to training and support between kinship carers and foster carers:** Kinship carers should have access to information, advice, practical and emotional support from the point they take on a child, including free legal advice, preparation and training, therapeutic and peer support.
- 3 Equalise leave between adoptive and kinship families:** Kinship carers should receive kinship care leave on a par with adoption leave when the child first moves into their care to allow the child to settle in.
- 4 Equalise support between children in kinship care and those in care:** Children in kinship care should have extra support in school and access to health and therapeutic support to help them deal with the impact of abuse, trauma and loss.



Visit **ValueOurLove.Kinship.org.uk**
to join the campaign

The Cost of Loving: Annual survey of kinship carers 2022 full report

ABOUT KINSHIP CARE

Kinship care is when a family member or friend looks after a child when their parent(s) aren't able to. This can be an informal arrangement between the carer and the parent, or it can be through a legal order secured through the family court, such as a special guardianship order (SGO), child arrangements order (CAO), or residence order (RO). In some cases, a local authority is involved in placing the child with the kinship carer, in which case the kinship carer becomes a kinship/family and friends foster carer (once an initial assessment is completed). They usually then need to undergo a full assessment, and their status as a foster carer will remain until a legal order (e.g. an SGO or CAO) is granted giving them parental responsibility for the child, or the child is returned to the care of their parents.

According to the 2011 census, an estimated 162,470 children were living with a relative in kinship care in England and Wales.¹ There are more children in kinship care than any other placement option for children whose parents are unable to care for them, and if these children were not being looked after by their kinship carers most would be in local authority care. Children in kinship care have usually had difficult experiences when in their parents' care. Experiences of trauma, abuse

and neglect, loss and separation are common and can often contribute towards children developing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which make caring for them more challenging.

Kinship carers themselves also often have additional vulnerabilities. They are more likely to be older, in poorer health, insecurely housed, socially isolated, and living in poverty than any other parenting group.² Kinship carers rarely receive the support they require to meet the needs of their children, and kinship children themselves can struggle to access adequate support. This is despite their needs and experiences being broadly similar to those who are looked after in local authority care.

Despite these challenges, most children in kinship care experience stable, consistent, and loving care from someone who is connected to them throughout their childhoods.³ Furthermore, the educational, health and employment outcomes for children who have grown up in kinship care, although consistently lower than for their peers in the general population, are often better than for those who were looked after by unrelated carers in the care system.⁴

¹ Wijedasa (2015)

² Wijedasa (2017), Hunt (2020)

³ Farmer (2008)

⁴ Wellard et al (2017), Sebba et al (2015), Sacker et al (2021)

CONTEXT

Kinship conducts a survey of kinship carers annually. The findings help develop an understanding of what life has been like for kinship carers over the previous year. The survey allows us to learn about the issues that kinship carers face to better inform the delivery of support for kinship carers within our and others' services, and helps us make recommendations for changes to policy and practice. Since 2020, Kinship has also delivered an additional Financial Allowances Survey annually which specifically explores kinship carers' financial circumstances and experiences with financial support.

METHOD

The survey was developed using Form Assembly and was live from 12 July to 8 August 2022. The survey was promoted widely via Kinship's kinship carer community, social media, partner organisations, and our professionals and researchers networks. In total, the survey received 1,564 responses from kinship carers caring for 2,378 children in England and Wales. Respondents were free to choose which questions they did and did not want to answer. The number following the letter *n* included with each question's responses in the 'Key findings' section reflects the number of respondents who chose to respond to that particular question. Survey logic was used to restrict visibility of certain questions dependent on respondent's previous answers; an explanation of where this was used and impact on overall available sample of respondents for each question is included where relevant below. Most questions required respondents to select individual or multiple options, but a small number were free text questions which asked respondents to leave comments; these latter questions were analysed thematically.

LIMITATIONS

Most of respondents to this survey are likely to be kinship carers who are members of Kinship's kinship carer community or who were referred to the survey by other organisations that provide them with support. Indeed, referral pathways tracked by the Form Assembly platform show that 59% of respondents completed the survey following a link included within an email from Kinship, and 41% from a direct link to the survey (with potential pathways including our and others' websites, social media accounts, and other organisational newsletters or communications). This means they are likely to be more aware of the services that we or other organisations offer and are more likely to have received support than other kinship carers. As such, the findings from this survey may represent a more positive view of kinship carers' experiences than is experienced by many.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Section A

About the children

1. What is the legal status of the children? (please tick all that apply if you have more than one child with different legal statuses)

Status	Count	%*
Special guardianship order	1055	68%
Care order / interim care order (where the child is in foster care)	184	12%
Child arrangements order	124	8%
Residence order	107	7%
Informal arrangement (including private foster care)	100	6%
Section 20 Children Act 1989 voluntary accommodation	13	1%
Supervision order	9	1%
Other (adoption)	3	0%
Don't know	39	3%

* Percentage totals exceed 100 since respondents were asked to tick as many that applied as some carers might care for more than one child, each with different legal orders. n=1555

Most kinship carers were providing care for their children through a formalised kinship arrangement, most commonly a special guardianship order (SGO). As noted in the 'Limitations' section above, our survey sample is likely biased towards kinship carers who receive support and are aware of our services, and given the way that support from central government, local authorities and other organisations is often restricted to those with formalised kinship arrangements, this is also reflected in the survey cohort. Informal kinship

carers are significantly underrepresented and kinship carers caring for children in formalised kinship arrangements (i.e. with a legal order for the child or as a kinship foster carer) are significantly overrepresented.

2. Why were the children unable to live with parents?

Reason	Count	%*
Abuse or neglect	831	54%
Substance misuse	628	40%
Parent unable to care	452	29%
Domestic abuse	399	26%
Parent disability, illness, mental health	385	25%
Parental death	111	7%
Difficulties between parent and child	89	6%
Parent(s) in prison	86	6%
Very young parent	78	5%
Other**	51	3%

* Percentage totals exceed 100 since respondents were asked to tick as many as applied. n=1551

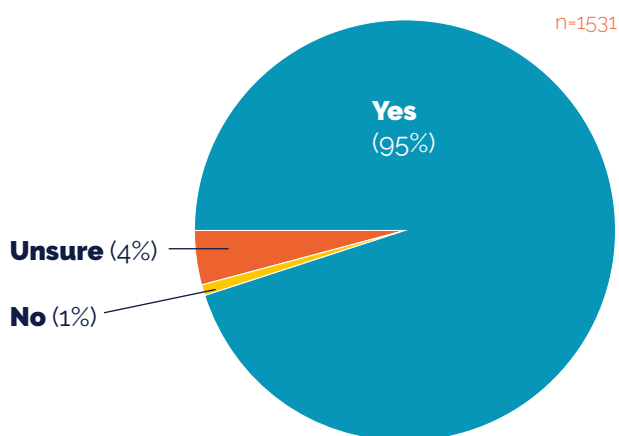
** Respondents who selected 'Other' typically referenced abandonment, death of other non-parental carers, homelessness, or the child's disability or needs exceeding the caring capacity of the parent(s).

Many of the reasons identified by kinship carers for why children are unable to live with their parents align broadly with the primary need identified at first assessment and factors identified at the end of assessment for children in need, and

with primary need for children who are looked after in the care system. Abuse and neglect is consistently the most commonly identified factor across all cohorts of children, with 44% of children in need cases in England identifying this at the end of assessment⁵, 54% of kinship carers noting this as a reason for their arrangement in our survey, and 66% of children looked after in England having this recorded as their primary need⁶. Similarly, substance misuse and domestic violence are also commonly identified factors for welfare intervention across all groups of children. Comparably in Wales, 53% of children in need have abuse or neglect listed as their category of need⁷ and 59% of children starting to be looked after last year as their identified need for care⁸.

The responses illustrate that children who go into kinship care have commonly experienced trauma and loss. All of these issues have a substantial impact on children's development and behaviour⁹, often presenting challenges for kinship carers who can struggle with the challenges of parenting. Children who have experienced these early life events are likely to require more specialist help and support to safely and effectively manage the potential impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing.¹⁰

3. Do you consider this to be a long term or permanent arrangement?



Consistent with the findings from last year's survey, 95% of respondents said they considered their kinship arrangement to be long term or permanent. Kinship carers step up at short notice, often during an emergency, to provide a safe and

loving home for children. The belief they have in the permanency of these arrangements illustrates their dedication to ensuring their children have the stability they need to heal and thrive.

Understandably, respondents who selected 'No' or 'Unsure' were more likely to do so where the child was in a kinship foster care placement or informal arrangement, or where the legal status wasn't known, than for those secured long-term by a special guardianship or child arrangements order. In addition, half of those who did not think or weren't sure that the placement was long-term or permanent had been caring for the child(ren) for one year or less, and a quarter for six months or less.

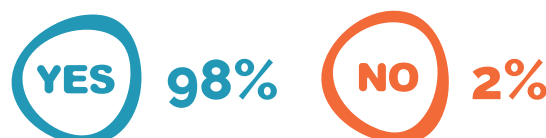
4. Has your child ever had children's services involvement?

Response	Count	%*
Yes	1326	86%
They were in local authority care	663	43%
They were on a child protection plan	689	44%
They were on a child in need plan	419	38%
No	132	9%
Unsure	92	6%

* Percentages for each option under 'Yes' are taken from the total responses (i.e. not just the cohort of respondents who answered 'Yes') and add up to more than 100 as respondents could select as many as were applicable for their child(ren)'s experience.

n=1550

5. Do you think your child would be in local authority care if you had not stepped in to look after them?



n=1557

5 Department for Education (2021a)
 6 Department for Education (2021b)
 7 Welsh Government (2021d)
 8 Welsh Government (2021e)
 9 Howe (2005)
 10 Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care (2015)

6. Who do you think would be looking after the child if you had not agreed to do so?

Response	Count	%
The child would have been able to live with another family member or family friend	20	69%
The child would have remained with their parent	9	31%

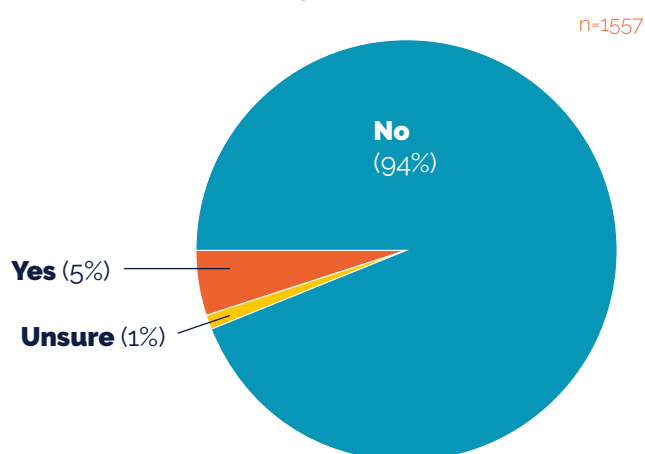
n=29 ((from n=33 'No' response to Q5)

These responses illustrate that prior child welfare intervention of some type by the local authority is very common for children growing up in kinship care – 86% had previous or ongoing experience of care and/or support through a child protection or child in need plan. This reflects the responses in Q2 which explored reasons for why children in kinship care were unable to live with their parents and found commonalities of experience across different social care groups. An overwhelming 98% of respondents believed the child would have entered or remained in care had they not stepped in to look after them, demonstrating the significance of kinship carers' intervention in terms of potential future experiences and outcomes for children and their parents and wider families. Only 9 respondents across the entire survey believed a possible scenario for the child(ren) involved them continuing to live with their parent(s).

This is important to understand, particularly in the context of the recent recommendations from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, which proposed that some welcome aspects of improved support for kinship carers – such as financial allowances, paid employment leave and access to legal aid – are restricted to those carers who have a special guardianship order or child arrangements order and where the child would otherwise be in care.¹¹ The mechanism for how this latter condition is judged and evidenced would significantly impact on how many carers can likely receive this support if the recommendation is implemented as suggested. Our survey responses suggest this additional condition is likely irrelevant given the proportion of children growing up in kinship care who have experienced abuse, neglect

and other family circumstances which would typically lead to them being looked after by the local authority; an additional test risks excluding some families who would significantly benefit from additional financial and other support.¹² This is also a significant equalities issue given what we know about the underrepresentation of Black and minority ethnic children in formalised kinship arrangements; they and their carers are disproportionately less likely to benefit from recommendations targeted only at kinship families secured by a legal order (see discussion following Qs 12-13).

7. Does your child have to help to care for you or another family member (e.g. due to illness or a disability)?



Although the majority of children in kinship care did not have caring responsibilities, at least 5% of those cared for by survey respondents did. This is higher than the proportion of young carers identified in the general population for those aged 5-19 years (2.5%), although this is likely to be an underestimate.¹³ Young carers are more likely to be older children, and although our survey did not ask a question about the age of the carers' child(ren), we can see this trend reflected for our survey cohort too based on responses to Q21 on the length of time carers had been caring for their children: of those caring for children with caring responsibilities themselves, 69% had been doing so for at least 6 years, and only 14% for 2 years or less. Given too what we know about the age and other vulnerabilities of the kinship carer population, it is likely that there is a higher prevalence of

¹¹ MacAlister (2022)

¹² For more information on the recommendations made by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care around kinship care and unlocking the power of family networks, visit kinship.org.uk/care-review.

¹³ Wayman et al (2016)

young carers amongst the population of children in kinship care than in the general population. Services supporting kinship families should consider their information and signposting for children and carers so they can better identify and support young carers, and further research should be done to better understand the prevalence and experiences of kinship care within this group.

8. What are some of the positive changes you've seen in your child(ren) as a result of your care?

A word cloud is included below based on the free text responses to this question, with the size of the word or phrase corresponding to the number of times it was used by respondents.

n=1439



Carers reflected on some of the most significant changes they had seen in their kinship children after stepping up to care for them in often traumatic and challenging circumstances. The majority shared examples of children who had experienced positive shifts in their emotional wellbeing and behaviour, particularly around feelings of confidence and self-esteem; the word "happy" appeared in 20% of responses. Many had also managed to support their children to learn how to deal with other challenges around disabilities or additional needs.

- “ Almost non-existent mental health issues as a result of a safe and supportive family environment, growing in confidence, building friendships, being a lovely 'big brother' to my own much younger children.
- “ Better nutrition, less anxious, proper routine , child focused life seeing her blossom and be allowed to be a seven year old.

Specifically, a number of responses highlighted trust and how their child(ren) had needed to learn again how to open up to adults and peers, and the sense of safety and belonging which their care

managed to provide to enable this to happen. Stability was a crucial ingredient for this; words like “stability” or “settled” appeared in over 10% of responses.

“ *He’s more trusting, he knows we won’t let him down and we have an open and honest relationship. Many adults let him down in the past including social services.*

“ *More confident, can now play, she has great siblings like relationships with cousins and safe and loving home.*

“ *She’s growing, she’s happy, she’s inquisitive, she’s not drinking and smoking and sleeping all day. She’s making better choices and looking after herself. She trusts me and relies on me and knows she has unconditional love.*

For many, experiences and performance at school provided one of the clearest illustrations of how their child(ren)’s lives had improved for the better since coming into their care. Others highlighted specific significant achievements in their children’s lives, such as going to college or university.

“ *He’s attending school now and mostly completing his work well. He has become more outgoing and says he feels happy and safe.*

“ *First one to go to college.*

“ *One niece is now at university the other one is coming on leaps and bounds.*

“ *100% school attendance - just going into Y11 and expected to pass all her GCSEs, ability to form a few close friendships, seeing her able to relax at home (not always on guard), lovely relationships with grandparents and cousins formed, normal stroppy teenager behaviour means she feels safe.*

Section B

About the carers

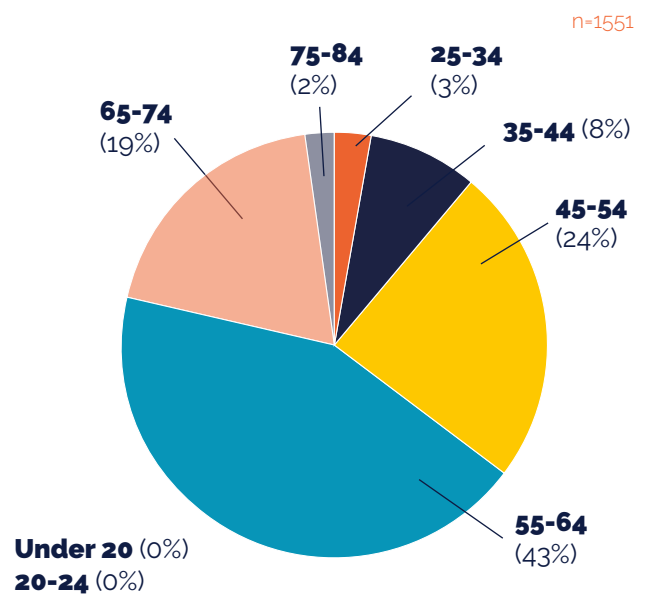
9. What is your gender?

Gender	Count	%
Female	1365	88%
Male	177	11%
Prefer not to say	9	1%
Other	0	0%

n=1551

Women made up 88% of respondents which is generally consistent with previous Kinship surveys.¹⁴ Female kinship carers can find taking on the role exacerbates existing challenges associated with their gender, such as the financial losses associated with both the cumulative impact of the gender pay gap and previous time spent out of the labour market (and without pension contributions) when raising their own children, plunging them into poverty later in their lives when they become kinship carers.

10. What is your age category?



n=1551

11. What is your relationship with your kinship children?

(Please tick all that apply if you have a different relationship to each child)

* The percentage exceeds 100 since respondents were asked to tick as many that applied as some carers might care for more than one child, each with different relationships to the carer.

Gender	Count	%*
Maternal grandparent	764	48%
Paternal grandparent	437	27%
Aunt or uncle	226	14%
Other connected person	60	4%
Other relative	52	3%
Great grandparent	27	2%
Friend	23	1%
Sibling	15	1%
Cousin	11	1%

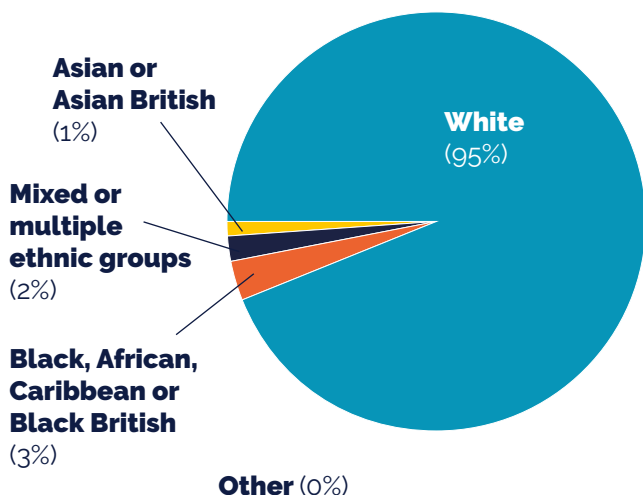
n=1595

Kinship carers are generally older and most commonly grandparents to the child they step up to raise. 62% of carers who responded to the survey were aged between 55 and 84. We know that the older age of kinship carers contributes to the likelihood of additional health issues which can make parenting more difficult. The increased age gap between children and their carers (compared to children and their parents in the general population) can create challenges too for both for children and their carers, particularly in situations or places where knowledge and understanding of kinship care is low.

Despite the responses broadly reflecting the typical age profile expected, this year's results do mark a small, continued shift in the age profile of respondents when compared to previous years. The relative proportion of carers aged 44 years or under has grown by 4 percentage points from 7% in 2019 to 11% this year.¹⁵ It is important that organisations supporting kinship families continue to ensure they support and advocate for all kinship carers, including younger kinship carers who are typically older siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins.

12. What is your ethnicity?

n=1536



¹⁵ Grandparents Plus (2019)

¹⁶ Wijedasa (2015)

¹⁷ What Works for Children's Social Care (2021)

¹⁸ For more information visit kinship.org.uk/news/kpmg-research-of-kinship-families-from-black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-communities/

13. If you are from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background, do you feel you have been discriminated in your role as a kinship carer because of race or ethnicity?

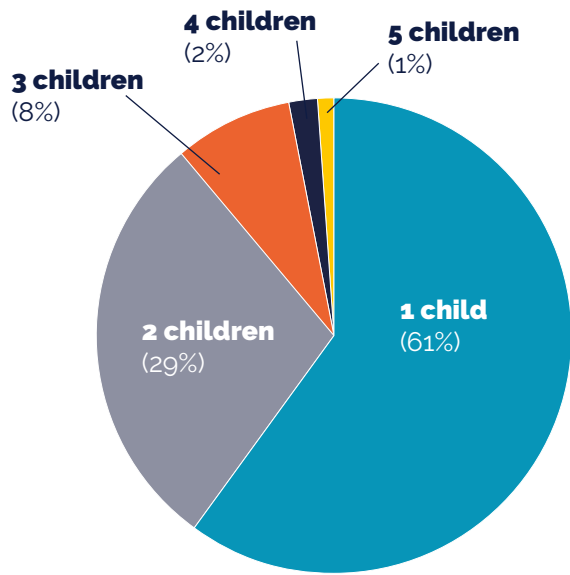


n=82

Consistent with previous years, an overwhelming majority of respondents identified as White, most commonly White British. Only 5% of carers selected a Black, Asian or Mixed ethnicity. This is inconsistent with other data which suggests that 32% of children in kinship care with a relative in England are from non-White backgrounds and that the prevalence of kinship care is the lowest amongst White children (1.2% in England and 1.5% in Wales) and highest amongst Black children (2.7% in England and 3.0% in Wales).¹⁶ At least some of this discrepancy can be explained by the locations of our survey respondents (see Q22) as well as the relative underrepresentation of children from Black and other minority ethnic groups in formalised kinship arrangements (i.e. kinship foster care and kinship special guardianship) and the overrepresentation of these groups in informal arrangements.¹⁷

However, this lack of alignment with what we understand to be the likely representation of kinship families is extremely concerning, particularly as it limits the accuracy and power of the survey responses in representing the diversity of kinship carers' views and experiences, and illustrates that Kinship's and other services are struggling to sufficiently reach and engage a significant number of kinship families. As part of Kinship's ongoing anti-racism journey, we will and must ensure that our services and surveys further reach and better understand the experiences of those kinship families who are currently significantly underrepresented and we are excited to be leading new research into this, supported by the KPMG Foundation.¹⁸ This is particularly important given that a quarter of carers from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds felt they had been discriminated against in their role as a kinship carer because of their race or ethnicity.

14. How many children do you look after?



n=1554

More than 5 children (0%)

15. Are you also caring for your own biological children?



n=1540

16. Have your biological children ever been offered professional support because you are a kinship carer?



n=360 (from n=360 'Yes' response to Q15)

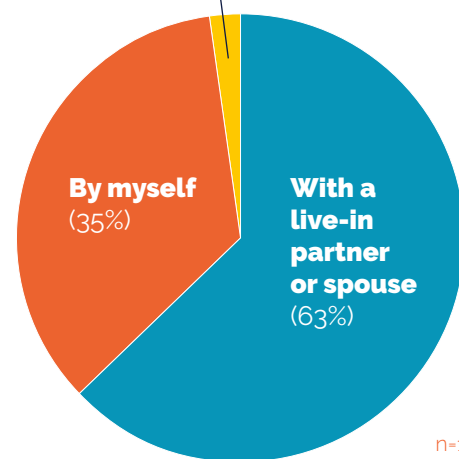
17. Do you have any other caring responsibilities (such as for elderly family members)?



n=1549

18. How do you look after your children?

With a partner or spouse who does not live with me (2%)



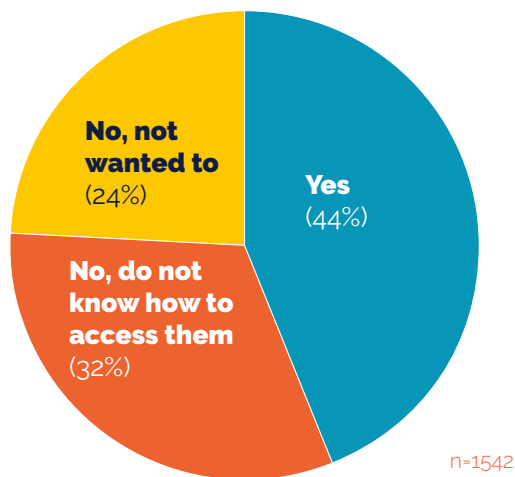
n=1522

19. Do you have other kinship carers that you have supportive relationships with?



n=1545

20. Have you ever attended a peer support group (i.e. where you have the chance to meet other kinship carers)?

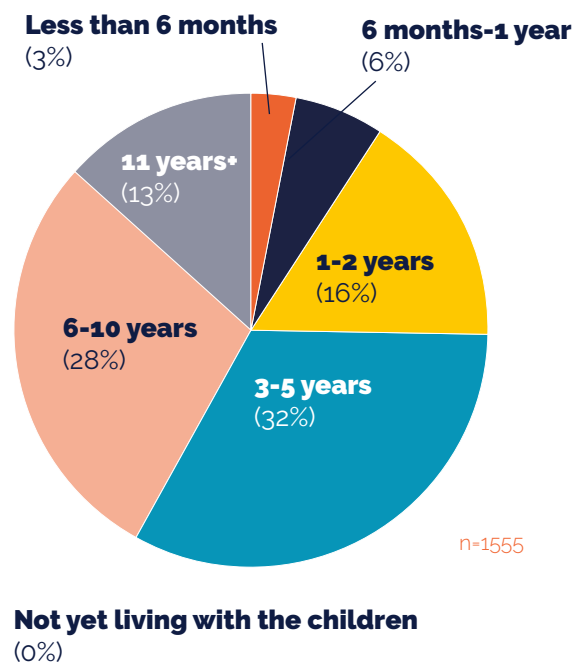


40% of carers were responsible for looking after two or more kinship children, and nearly a quarter of carers were looking after their own biological children as well as their kinship children. In addition, over a third had additional caring responsibilities such as for elderly family members. This is a much higher prevalence of carers than within the general population where roughly 1 in 8 people take on a caring responsibility.¹⁹ Each additional kinship or biological child or loved one who requires care increases the emotional and physical strain on kinship carers, exacerbating their often already challenging circumstances. This impacts not only on carers themselves but the children they are raising; only 12 carers said their biological children had been offered professional support because of their roles as a kinship carer.

A significant minority of kinship carers are also doing this alone without the support of a partner or spouse – over a third said they looked after their children by themselves, likely increasing feelings of isolation and loneliness commonly experienced by those who take on a kinship caring role. It's common for carers to find that friendships fall away as they lose the time they once had for social activities and grow disconnected from the experiences of friends who don't understand their new circumstances.²⁰ Peer support, through programmes like Kinship Connected, has been

shown to improve emotional wellbeing and reduce isolation for kinship carers²¹, but three-quarters of respondents said they didn't have supportive relationships with other carers. As we continue to roll out the national Peer-to-Peer Supportive Service²², funded by the Department for Education, we will seek to grow the numbers of kinship carers who have accessed a peer support group and ensure the third of carers who currently don't know how to access them have the tools and information they need to confidently do so.

21. How long have you been a kinship carer?



41% of carers had been caring for their children for six years or more, and 13% for 11 years or more. Together with the response to Q3 which suggested 95% of carers thought their kinship arrangement was long-term or permanent, these figures illustrate the high rates of stability for children in kinship care. This aligns with Kinship's *Growing Up in Kinship Care* study which found that the young people who participated had lived with their carers for an average of eleven years²³; this stability and consistency is vital to supporting children's physical and emotional wellbeing, and their educational and other outcomes in later life. Other studies have too demonstrated the low rates of placement breakdown for children cared

¹⁹ Carers UK (2019)

²⁰ Selwyn et al (2013), McGrath (2022a)

²¹ Starks and Whitley (2020)

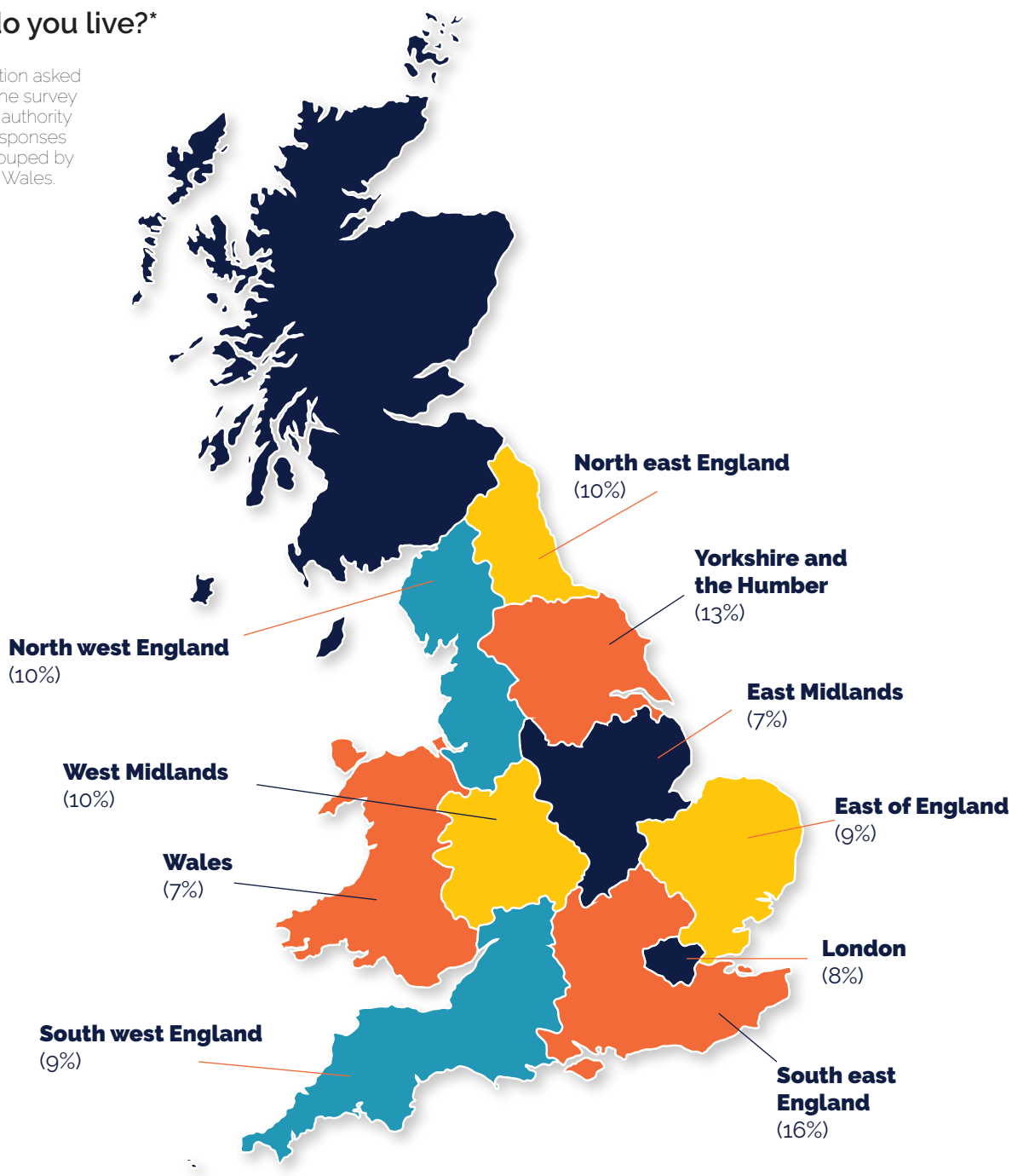
²² For more information visit kinshippeersupport.org.uk

²³ Wellard et al (2017)

for under a special guardianship order compared to those in local authority care²⁴. Comparably, a quarter of children in care in both 2018 and 2019 experienced more than two placement moves over two years²⁵, although this may be impacted by the age at which children typically enter kinship and local authority care.²⁶

22. Where do you live?*

* Note that the question asked of respondents in the survey was 'In which local authority do you live?' but responses here have been grouped by English region and Wales.



n=1522

²⁴ Harwin et al (2019)

²⁵ Children's Commissioner (2020)

²⁶ What Works for Children's Social Care (2022)

23. Is this the same local authority where the child lived with their parents before coming into your care?



n=1542

24. Does your child have contact with one or both of their parents?



n=1546

relationships can be especially important for young people in kinship care during times of family stress²⁹, and care-experienced young people note how the disruption associated with changes to where they go to school and where they live can act to dislocate them from their local communities and a sense of identity and place³⁰.

Contact with parents is one of the key considerations for children growing up in kinship care, and especially for those who may be living further away from where they were when they were living with their parents. 78% of carers said their child(ren) had ongoing contact with at least one parent, the same figure as in last year's survey.³¹ Living beyond the boundaries of the placing local authority can also have a significant impact on access to services for kinship carers and their children where these are delivered by or referred to from the local authority; it can often be very difficult for kinship carers living elsewhere to identify and access appropriate support near to where they live.

The locations of our survey respondents are broadly reflective of the general population of England and Wales living in each region or nation, with the exceptions of the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber (which are overrepresented in our survey) and London (which is underrepresented in our survey). The North East and Yorkshire and the Humber have a regional prevalence of children living in kinship care with relatives above the national average and at a similar level to London.²⁷ The split of survey respondents across England and Wales is likely to reflect the geographical provision of Kinship's services at least partially and therefore who is engaged through our communications about the survey.

Over two-thirds (68%) of kinship carers caring for children were living in the same local authority as where the child lived with their parents. As a loose comparison, children in local authority care in England are less likely to be living within their home local authority area (55%); this is true too for those in foster care specifically (59%) and particularly for those placed for adoption (25%).²⁸ Across all different forms of care – both within and outside of kinship care – there can be important reasons as to why it might be in the best interests of a child for them to live outside of the area they were living in with their parents. However, peer

²⁷ DWijedasa (2015)

²⁸ Department for Education (2021b)

²⁹ Wellard et al (2017)

³⁰ APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2022)

³¹ Kinship (2021)

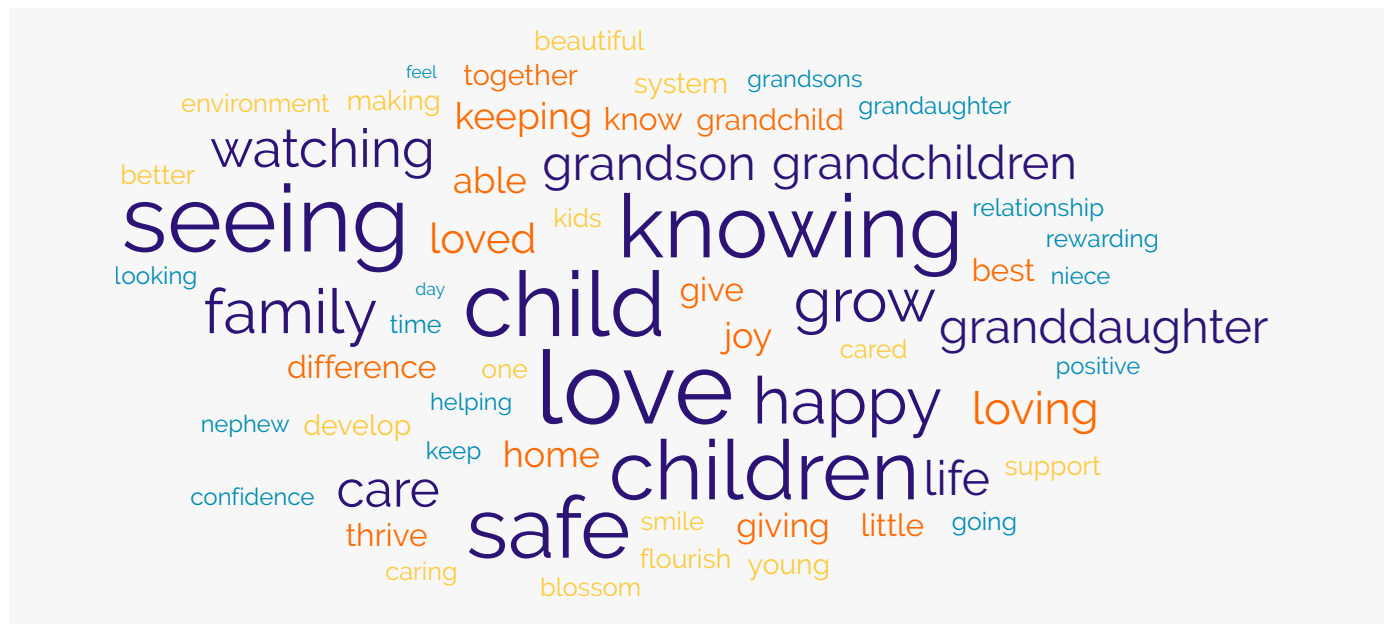
In addition, other carers spoke to the seemingly never-ending battle they had to access support or get what they felt their children needed. Many were exhausted from years and years of challenging decisions they felt weren't in their child's best interests.

- “ *Fighting for what is right for the children and ensuring they have access to everything a child out of care would have.*
- “ *Having to fight to be heard and to stop letting people walk all over you.*
- “ *Having to fight every professional for support and being told everything is trauma, but nothing is actually done to support that, which you leaves you feeling like you've made it up or that you need a label to get the correct support in place.*

26. In one sentence please tell us what is the best thing about being a kinship carer?

A word cloud is included below based on the free text responses to this question, with the size of the word or phrase corresponding to the number of times it was used by respondents.

n=1479



Kinship carers often tell us, despite the incredibly challenging circumstances they've faced and the lack of support and recognition they receive, they would choose to do it again if they had to because of the impact their love and care has on their children. In fact, 24% of responses to this question included the word "love".

Carers focussed mostly on the benefit of keeping children safe within their family network and the stability that living with relatives or friends who love them brings, in contrast to what may have happened had the child went into the care system.

- “ *My grandson stayed with me and I get to watch him grow up.*
- “ *The love, craziness & joy that our little one brings to our family & the love & acceptance our bio children have with her.*
- “ *Looking after my grandchildren and knowing they are safe.*
- “ *Knowing we have stopped him from being in the system.*

Many carers highlighted specific achievements they'd seen their kinship children aspire to and succeed with, as well as the development they'd been on since first coming into their care, particularly after experiencing significant loss or trauma. Some carers also spoke fondly of the impact their children had had on them, helping to nurture, develop and care for them in return.

- “ *Supporting her through this difficult journey, witnessing tears into smiles, enabling her to embracing opportunities and contentment to go forward into her adult life, is amazing.*
- “ *I love having him around and seeing him grow into a kind and outward going child.*
- “ *Making a difference to a young person, watching them grow, excel, be there for the milestones & Watch them blossom.*

Section C

Health

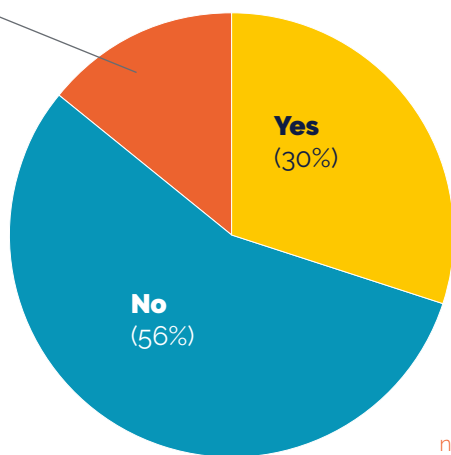
27. Do you believe any of your children have long-term physical and/or mental health needs?



n=1552

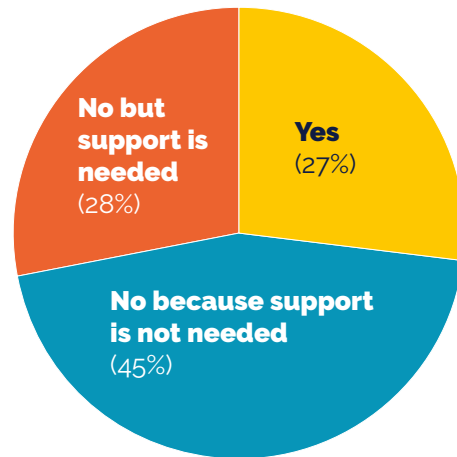
28. Have any of your children had a formal medical diagnosis for any physical or mental health needs or any developmental issues?

In the process of being assessed/diagnosed
(14%)



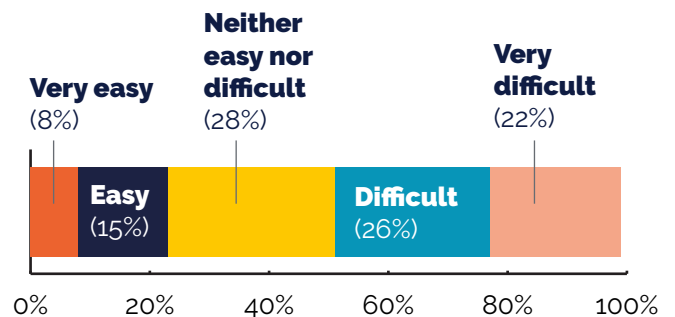
n=1543

29. Does your child receive professional support for their physical health needs?



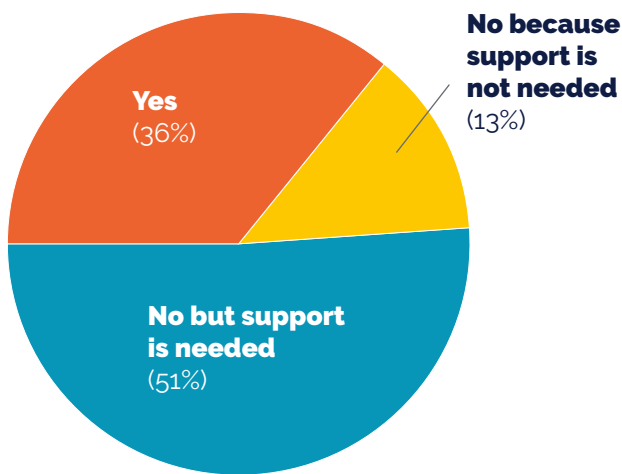
n=n-910 (from n=922 'Yes' response to Q27)

30. How easy was it to access support for your child's physical health needs?



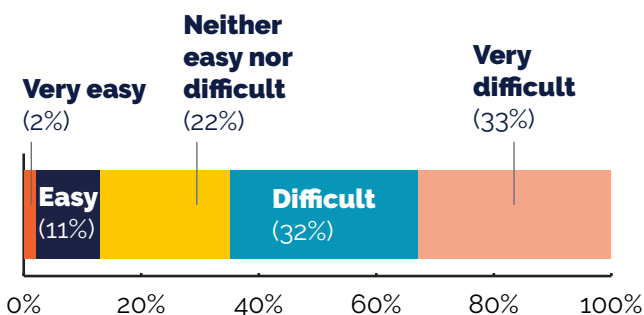
n=243 (from n=247 'Yes' response to Q29)

31. Does your child receive professional support for their mental health needs?



n=910 (from n=922 'Yes' response to Q27)

32. How easy was it to access support for your child's mental health needs?



n=322 (from n=325 'Yes' response to Q31)

3 in 5 carers (59%) believed their children had long-term physical or mental health needs, but only 30% had received a formal diagnosis. This is broadly similar to last year's survey at 62% and 33% respectively.³² Previous research has indicated that children growing up in kinship are nearly twice as likely to have a long-term health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities than children growing up with at least one parent³³ and that they are likely to have poorer emotional and behavioural outcomes than children in the general population – although stable and long-term placements are correlated with better mental health and wellbeing³⁴.

In this year's survey, we asked additional questions to better understand the nature of the support, or lack thereof, available to children to help them with their physical or mental health needs. The responses illustrate a significant difference in the delivery of support for physical and mental health needs. Amongst those where carers thought there was a long-term physical or mental health need, although children overall were more likely to be receiving professional support for mental than physical health needs, a far greater number and proportion (over 50%) weren't being provided support for mental health needs and felt this was needed. In addition, carers said that accessing mental health support wasn't easy; 65% said accessing this was either 'Difficult' or 'Very difficult' compared to 48% for those accessing physical health support.

In summary, the results show that there is significant unmet demand for mental health support in particular for children growing up in kinship care, and that even where this support is being provided, kinship families are struggling to access this easily. Children looked after by the local authority have a statutory right to a health assessment on entry to care, recognising that their past experiences mean they are more likely to have additional health needs. Despite the responses above and other studies demonstrating the high prevalence of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties amongst children in kinship care, stemming from prior experiences broadly similar to those in local authority care, the same right is not available to the majority of kinship children. A formal diagnosis can act to unlock support which would otherwise be unavailable, so it is likely that many kinship families are struggling without the support their children need at present.

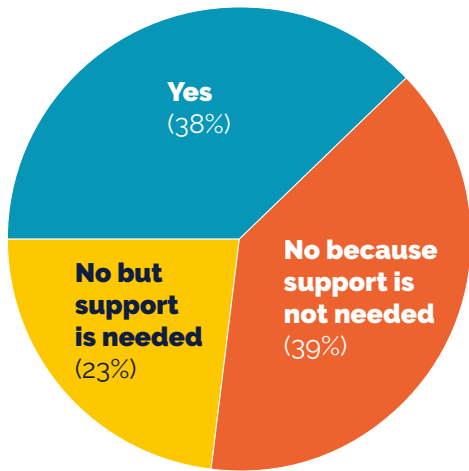
33. Do you believe you have a long-term health condition or disability?



n=1548

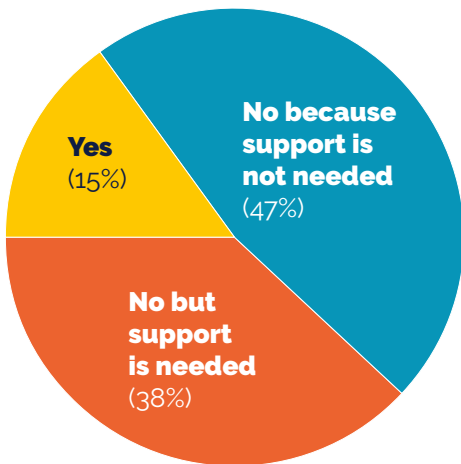
³² Kinship (2021)
³³ Wijedasa (2015)
³⁴ Hunt (2020)

34. Do you receive professional support for this?



n=666 (from n=677 'Yes' response to Q33)

35. Have you ever received therapeutic support to help you with the kinship carer role?



n=1553

This year, we also asked carers about their own health. 44% of carers said they believed they themselves had a long-term health condition or disability, with 38% receiving professional support associated with this but just under a quarter going without support despite there being a need. Similarly for children in kinship care, we know that relative kinship carers are more likely to report more health problems than parents³⁵, and that problems with kinship carers' own health and wellbeing can act to limit their ability to care for their children³⁶ and impact on their future health and educational outcomes³⁷. Only a very small proportion of carers (15%) had ever received therapeutic support to help them with their role.

³⁵ Wijedasa (2015)
³⁶ Selwyn et al (2013), Hunt (2020)
³⁷ Wellard et al (2017)

Section D

Education

36. Does your child attend school or college?

Response	Count	%*
Yes	1328	86%
Mainstream school or college	1167	75%
A special school or college	96	6%
Specialist provision in a mainstream school/college	44	3%
Alternative provision (e.g. a pupil referral unit)	21	1%
No	214	14%
Child is too young to attend school	120	8%
Not in education, employment or training	57	4%
Home schooled	31	2%
In employment or training (e.g. apprenticeship)	6	0%

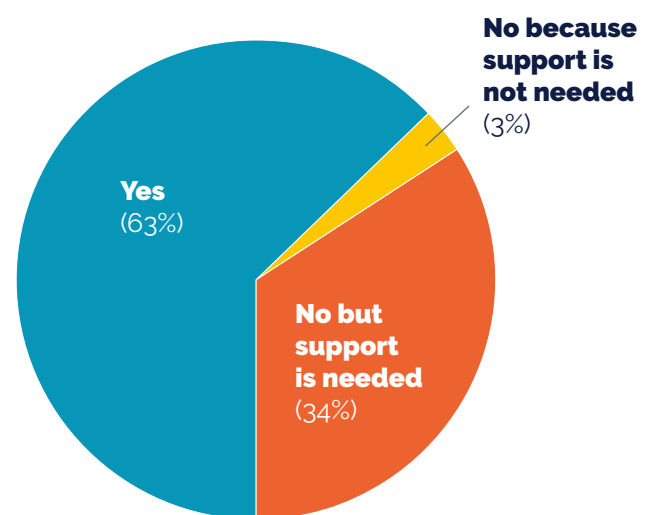
n=1550

37. Does your child have additional needs at school or college?



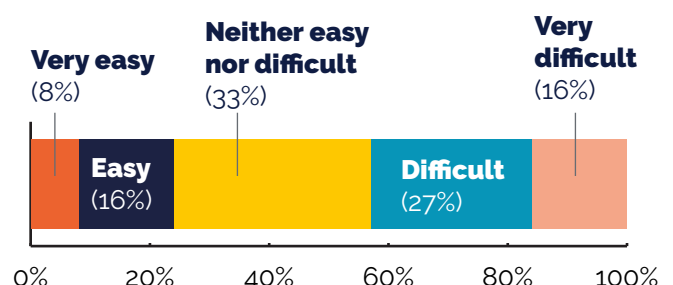
n=1299 (from n=1328 'Yes' response to Q36)

38. Does your child receive professional support for their additional educational needs?



n=618 (from n=637 'Yes' response to Q37)

39. How easy was it to access support for your child's additional educational needs?



n=368 (from n=389 'Yes' response to Q38)

40. Is your child on a reduced timetable?

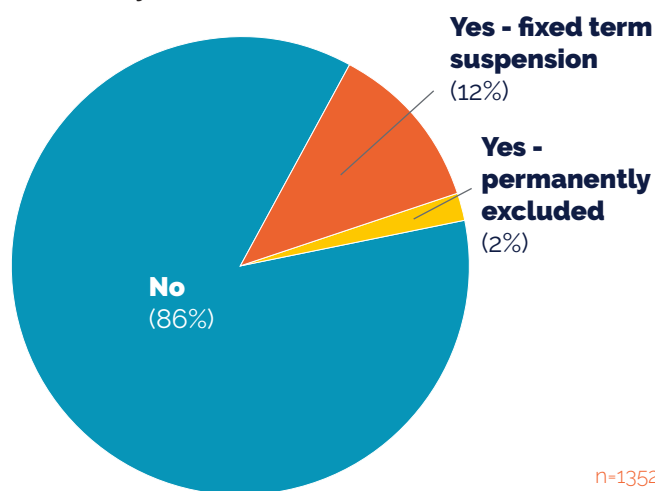


n=1243 (from n=1328 'Yes' response to Q36)

3 in 4 children cared for by survey respondents were attending a mainstream school or college, with our sample overrepresented in special schools or colleges, specialist provision in a mainstream setting, and alternative provision.³⁸ This is likely the result of the far higher prevalence of special educational needs amongst children in kinship care than in the general population, comparable to those in the care system³⁹, and reflected in the nearly half of respondents to Q37 who said their child(ren) had additional needs at school or college. 8% of children were on a reduced timetable at school or college.

Compared to responses for similar questions explored earlier in the report around the support provided for children's physical and mental health needs, a much higher proportion (63%) of carers said their child(ren) did receive professional support for their additional needs at school, and carers were slightly more likely to say that accessing the support was easier (especially compared to those who accessed mental health support). However, in contrast, only a very small group of carers (18 in total) whose child(ren) didn't receive support suggested this was because it wasn't needed. This tells us that, whilst provision for kinship children's additional needs at school or college is generally more widespread than any support for physical or mental health needs, there are very few children who do not need this additional support.

41. Has your child ever been excluded or suspended from school while they have been in your care?



12% of carers told us their child(ren) had received a suspension (previously known as a fixed term exclusion in England) from school whilst in their care, and 2% said they had received a permanent exclusion. There is no comparable 'ever' figure for all children in the general population, although the suspension and permanent exclusion rates for children in 2019/20 were 4.25% and 0.05% respectively in England⁴⁰, and rates of permanent exclusion, fixed term exclusions over 5 days and fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less were 0.05%, 0.12% and 2.72% respectively in Wales⁴¹. Children in social care groups in England (i.e. children in need, children on child protections plans, and looked after children) have higher than average rates of suspension or fixed term exclusion.⁴²

Given the association of increased likelihood of school exclusion with special educational needs, eligibility for free school meals and child welfare intervention, it is likely that rates are higher for children in kinship care than for the general population. Indeed, Wellard et al (2017) found that, across a sample of 53 young people who had grown up in kinship care, a third had experienced some form of school exclusion – although this likely reflects too the older age of the cohort in the study.⁴³ The recent Virtual School Head role extension to children with a social worker offers an opportunity to broaden support and reduce experiences of exclusion for more children in kinship care, but this still won't reach all kinship children who could benefit from this additional help.

³⁸ Department for Education (2022a, 2022b), Welsh Government (2021a, 2021b)

³⁹ Hunt (2020)

⁴⁰ Department for Education (2022c)

⁴¹ Welsh Government (2021c)

⁴² Department for Education (2022d)

⁴³ Wellard et al (2017)

Section E

Behaviour

42. Does your child have behaviours that are difficult to manage?



n=1554

43. Does your child get any support for their behaviours?



n=803 (from n=811 'Yes' response to Q42)

44. Have you ever received support to help you manage your child's behaviour?



n=808 (from n=811 'Yes' response to Q42)

45. Has your child been violent towards you in the past year?



n=1547

Over half of kinship carers told us that their children had behaviours which were difficult for them to manage, but less than a third of these children were receiving support for their behaviours. This is consistent with the findings in Q31 which explored available support for children in the broader context of challenges with mental health. Given that social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are common for children in kinship care, it is unsurprising that 75% carers who said their child(ren) had a long-term physical or mental health needs also said their child(ren) displayed behaviours which were difficult to manage (compared to 52% of all carers who answered the question).

Nearly 4 in 10 kinship carers had received some support to help them manage their child's behaviour. This is crucial as some research suggests that significant emotional and behavioural difficulties act to increase the risk of placement instability and disruption; Wade et al (2014) found that two-thirds of children cared for under a special guardianship order whose placement disrupted before the age of 17 were rated by their carers to have serious emotional and behavioural difficulties.⁴⁴

A quarter of kinship carers had experienced child-on-carer violence in the past year; this is almost identical to the figure in last year's survey (26%).⁴⁵ However, understandably, of those carers who said that their child had behaviours which were difficult to manage and where neither the child nor the carer received support to help manage these behaviours, the percentage of carers who said their child had been violent towards them in the past year increased to 42%. However, violent behaviour persisted at a greater rate (51%) even when support had been provided to both the child and the carer.

⁴⁴ Wade et al (2014)
⁴⁵ Kinship (2021)

Section F

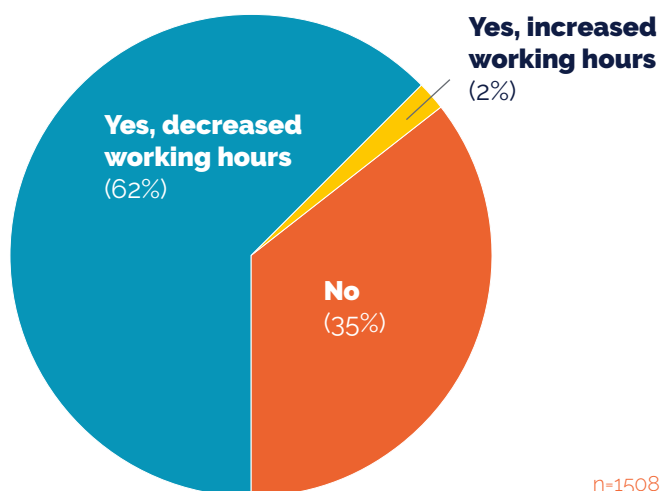
Finances

46. What is your current employment status?

Employment status	Count	%
Retired	345	22%
Employed part-time	294	19%
Full-time caring responsibilities	256	16%
Unemployed	252	16%
Employed full-time	221	14%
Self-employed	98	6%
Other*	87	6%

* The vast majority of respondents who selected 'Other' did so because they were unable to work due to disability or illness, although a smaller number said they were studying, delivering part-time care for other family members, or on a period of unpaid leave from work. n=1553

47. Did your employment status change when you became a kinship carer?



Only 2 in 5 kinship carers were in some form of employment despite closer to 4 in 5 being of working age. 16% were unemployed, significantly higher than the 3.8% UK unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over at the time of writing.⁴⁶ This means most kinship carers do not have income from wages to support their financial situation, often directly as a result of taking on a kinship caring role (see responses to Q50). Even for those who were able to maintain their employment when they became a kinship carer, the majority – 62% – were forced to decrease their working hours.

48. Do you feel you can always meet your children's needs in your current financial situation?



49. Do you receive an allowance from your local authority to help cover the costs of raising the children (please only tick yes if you receive an allowance for all your kinship children)?











The majority of kinship carers – nearly 6 in 10 – said they did not always feel able to meet their children’s needs in their current financial situation. We know that the financial circumstances of kinship families are incredibly worrying – our recent financial allowances survey found that 44% of carers could not pay all their household bills, 26% could not always afford food for their families, and 35% could not afford clothes for their children.⁴⁷ However, as seen within both this survey (i.e. see responses to Q52) and the financial allowances survey, kinship carers act to insulate their children from financial insecurity by making personal sacrifices; the wording of Q48 which asks about meeting children’s needs likely results in a lower response rate to ‘No’ than might be expected given the cost-saving strategies used by carers to protect spending on their children’s needs in the face of increasing costs.

Two-thirds of kinship carers received an allowance from their local authority to help them cover the costs of raising their children, although note the figure amongst the typical kinship carer population is likely much lower owing to the overrepresentation of carers caring for children under care orders (where as likely kinship foster carers they should have a statutory right to an allowance) and special guardians in our survey. Legal order (or lack thereof) is a significant determinant of whether financial support is offered; only 4% of informal kinship carers in the survey received an allowance. Carers were slightly more likely to say they could meet their children’s needs when they were in receipt of an allowance, demonstrating what we know about the impact of financial support for kinship families.⁴⁸ It’s essential that financial support is provided to all kinship carers, regardless of legal order, as they are typically caring for children who have had very similar experiences and demonstrate very similar needs.

50. Have you ever had to do any of the following in order to help care for your kinship child/children? (Select all that apply)

n=1564






	Response	Count	%*
	Spend savings	1046	67%
	Give up work	708	45%
	Convert space in your home to act as a bedroom for yourself or your children	419	27%
	Spend pension pot	336	21%
	Move where you live	309	20%
	Give up education or training	103	7%
	Sell or re-mortgage your home	96	6%
	No response**	108	7%

* Percentage totals exceed 100 since respondents were asked to select as many as applied.

** Note that, due to the absence of a ‘None of the above’ or equivalent option in this question or in Qs 51-53 which follow, we cannot distinguish between respondents who have chosen not to answer the question and respondents for whom none of the options apply. As such, all percentages given for Qs 50-53 are based on the total n=1564 responses to the entire survey and not just the cohort of respondents who selected an option in the question as in other survey questions.

When kinship carers take on the role, they become completely financially responsible for their children. As explored in other responses and evidenced in wider research, kinship carers are predominantly older women, often living in insecure housing and areas of high deprivation, with lower incomes. Many will have retired or had plans to retire soon, but find their financial planning to be completely insufficient in light of the unexpected costs of raising a child. It's therefore unsurprising yet still shocking that 7 in 10 kinship carers in our survey had been forced to spend their savings or pension pots in order to care for their child(ren). Nearly half had given up work at some point, and over a quarter had converted space in their homes to act as an additional bedroom.











51. Now think about the past year. Have you ever had to do any of the following in order to help care for your kinship child/children?
(select all that apply)

	Response	Count	%*
	Use credit cards to pay for everyday items	583	37%
	Borrow money from friends or family	530	34%
	Take out a short-term loan	262	17%
	Sell possessions (e.g. jewellery)	218	14%
	No response	631	40%

* Percentage totals exceed 100 since respondents were asked to select as many as applied.

n=1564










52. Which, if any, of the following personal sacrifices have you had to make in the past year in order to save money? (please tick all that apply)

	Response	Count	%*
	I have reduced personal expenditure of things like buying clothes for myself	1232	79%
	We have stopped going on family days out	720	46%
	I have avoided putting the heating on	623	40%
	I have bought less food	427	27%
	I use the oven less to cook to save energy costs	421	27%
	I have skipped some meals	324	21%
	I have missed paying bills	271	17%
	I have used food banks	208	13%
	I have stopped having baths/showers	161	10%
	No response	243	16%

* Percentage totals exceed 100 since respondents were asked to select as many as applied.

n=1564

53. If the cost of living continues to rise, which, if any, of the following do you plan to do? (please tick all that apply)

	Response	Count	%*
	I will reduce personal expenditure of things like buying clothes for myself	1357	87%
	We will stop going on family days out	1136	73%
	I will avoid putting the heating on	916	59%
	I will use the oven less to cook to save energy costs	668	43%
	I will reduce the number of baths/showers I have	643	41%
	I will buy less food	563	36%
	I will skip meals	462	30%
	I will have to miss paying my bills on time	403	26%
	I will use a food bank	377	24%
	No response	114	7%

* Percentage totals exceed 100 since respondents were asked to select as many as applied.

n=1564

Nearly 6 in 10 kinship carers told us they had borrowed money from friends or family, used credit cards for everyday purchases, or took out a short-term loan in the past year to support with the costs of raising a child. Specifically, over a third had sought financial assistance from friends or family, an increase from the 29% in last year's survey⁴⁹.

Worryingly, 4 in 10 kinship carers reported skipping meals, using food banks or buying less food in the past year. In stepping up to care for children and providing them with a safe and loving home, kinship carers are finding there is a significant cost to doing the right thing, with many carers' already difficult financial positions eroded further by the additional costs of raising a child and the rapidly increasing cost of living.

Kinship carers are also deeply concerned about the impact of their financial insecurity heading into the coming months; 6 in 10 say they will avoid putting the heating on this winter, and over 4 in 10 say they will be forced to use their ovens less or will have fewer baths or showers to save on energy costs. This position is completely avoidable; kinship families should be given the financial support they need and deserve. Experiences of chronic poverty have a significant impact on family health and other outcomes; nearly three-quarters of carers told us this year that their financial situations were having a negative effect on their health, and a third said the impact extended to their children's health too.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Kinship (2021)
⁵⁰ Kinship (2022)

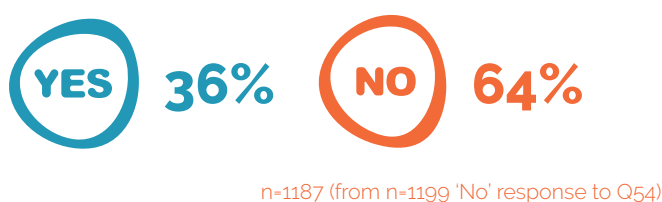
Section G

Local authority support

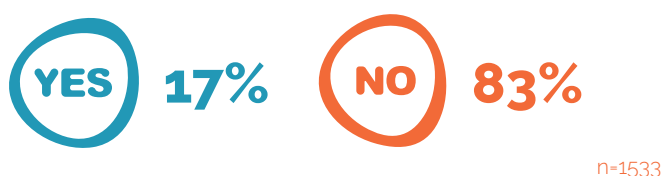
54. Overall, do you feel that you get the support you need from the local authority to help you to meet the needs of your kinship child?



55. Are you worried that the lack of support may mean that you may have to stop caring for your child in the future?



56. Have you ever been unable to take on the care of a brother or sister to a child you already care for (e.g. due to a lack of space at home or financial worries?)



Worryingly, 78% of carers felt they did not receive the support they needed from their local authority in order to meet the needs of their kinship child(ren); this is an 8 percentage point increase on last year's survey.⁵¹ Last year's lower figure may have reflected the greater number of kinship families (particularly those without a legal order) receiving support from Kinship as a result of the additional funding granted through the Government's Covid-19 emergency funding package for the VCSE sector; this enabled Kinship to increase capacity and extend our remote advice and support services to reach a greater number of carers during a time of urgent and heightened need.⁵²

Particularly concerning is that over a third of carers (36%) said that the lack of support meant that they may have to stop caring for their child(ren) in the future. This was strongly associated with financial insecurity; of those carers who said they were worried they may have to stop caring, over 77% also said they were not always able to meet the needs of their child in their current financial situation.

There are over 162,400 children growing up in kinship care in England and Wales, and given that 98% of survey respondents said they believed the child would be in care if they hadn't stepped up to raise them, this leaves over 58,000 children at risk of entering the care system from kinship care in the future. This would come at significant cost, not

⁵¹ Kinship (2021)

⁵² Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (2022)

The majority of carers said something about how they'd wish they'd known how challenging their kinship experience would be; 13% of responses included the word "hard" or "difficult". Many shared how emotionally draining they found the role and the plans they had unexpectedly had to put on hold as a result of stepping up.

- “ *How much energy you need to get through a normal day.*
- “ *That it would be so hard because of lack of support and training.*
- “ *How hard it was going to be, more mentally than physically.*

Many spoke about the support, or lack of support, they weren't aware of before becoming a kinship carer; a quarter of responses included the word "support". This included the lack of help with navigating the legal system and family court, with understanding the options available to them and their rights and entitlements, and in helping them to care for their children.

- “ *I wish I had I known that there is very little support for kinship carers. It would have helped to be able to have contact with someone for help if needed instead of just being left to get on with it. It's very unfair the way we are treated.*
- “ *All the info I have had to find out myself on internet and through support groups... this should be offered straight away... no one should be left in the dark like we were.*
- “ *How to navigate the legal process without spending huge amounts of money.*

In particular, not knowing the financial implications of taking on a kinship caring role was highlighted; nearly 1 in 5 responses included a word such as "financial" or "cost". More specifically, a significant number of carers shared a wish that they'd known the financial and other impacts of moving to a special guardianship or child arrangements order and the absence of guaranteed financial support, and how the perverse incentive of a child going into the care system and acquiring 'looked after' status can act to unlock crucial support which isn't available for kinship children otherwise.

- “ *How emotionally and financially difficult it would be to walk the tightrope of kinship care.*
- “ *Having known now what I do I would of stayed as a foster carer.*
- “ *I would have completely reconsidered taking on a child albeit would not change now. So much I have had to give up. The means test each year causes terrible anxiety.*

Other carers spoke of the implications of childhood trauma and issues around attachment, and the support their children would need to heal from some of their prior experiences – often a very different experience to caring for their own biological children.

- “ *Honesty regarding the difficulty of the role and the long term lasting effects and damage the neglect had on my grandson.*
- “ *That it would be so hard trying to get the children back to some sort of normal life, as they were always scared quiet and didn't trust anyone, it took me years to get them where they are now.*
- “ *How different it would be to raising my own.*

A number also shared frustrations about the operation of children's services systems and professionals, and challenges around intrusive practices, meetings and requirements.

- “ *How biased, judgemental and intrusive the social workers would be.*
- “ *Never assume social workers and other professionals will follow up on what they say they will do. Always chase and don't be afraid of seeming overbearing.*

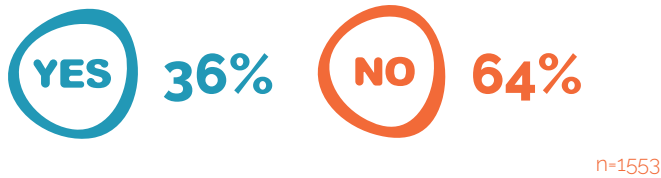
Finally, the last broad group of responses spoke to issues around relationships and family dynamics, particularly how the role would challenge their sense of self and social and family ties. Some highlighted how they'd wish they'd known about peer support much earlier.

- “ *How I would lose my identity.*
- “ *How it would impact all of my familiar family relationships and the tensions it would cause.*
- “ *How lonely, isolated we would become.*

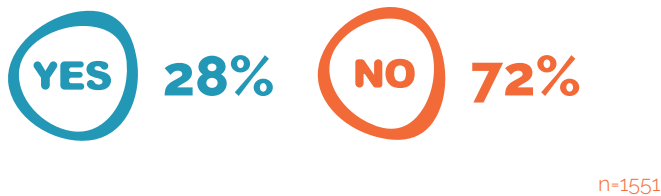
Despite all the challenges, some respondents also took the opportunity to emphasise that they would make the same decision again, regardless of what they might know now. The love which kinship carers have for their children was clear to see in the responses (and is explored further in Q26).

- “ How rewarding it is.
- “ How much I would grow to love our little girl.

59. Did your local authority offer you any financial support or help accessing benefits when your child first moved in?



60. Has your local authority ever signposted you to other places where you could get information and support?



61. Where did your local authority signpost you to?

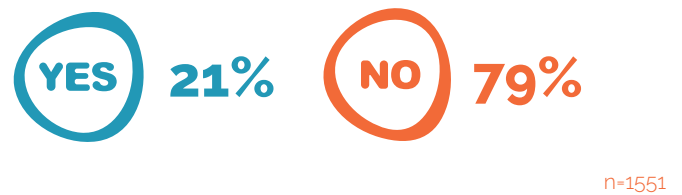
Response	Count	%*
Kinship	277	64%
A peer support group	134	31%
A different charity	74	17%
Other*	62	14%

n=435 (from n=442 'Yes' response to Q60)

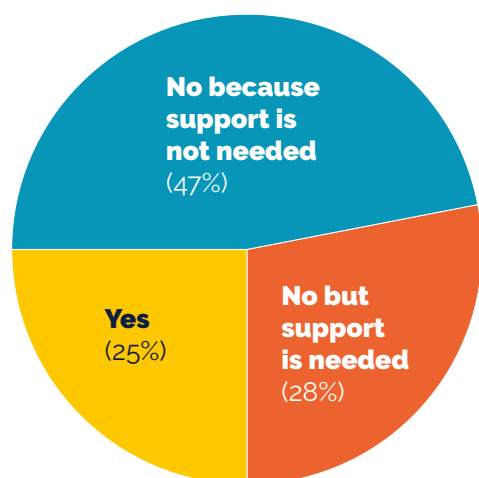
* Typical responses to 'Other' included solicitors, regional adoption agencies, specialist social workers or therapists, facilities for disabled children, Citizens Advice and others for information around benefits, parenting courses and other books/resources, food banks, and other voluntary and community organisations supporting wider groups of carers.

Kinship care often happens during crisis; less than a third of carers received information about being a kinship carer – such as their rights and entitlements or the different legal options available to them – before or shortly after the child moved in. This aligns with other studies which suggest that most carers did not feel they had been given sufficient information to know whether or not it was the right decision for them to become a kinship carer.⁵⁴ The consequences for carers not receiving appropriate information and advice are significant; it prevents carers from being able to access the support which they may be entitled to from the government or other sources, including the voluntary sector. Only 28% had been signposted to other places they could access support, such as Kinship, a local peer support group, or other resources online or in their local community. We hope to see these figures improve in future surveys with the development of Kinship Compass – a new project which aims to develop clear and easy-to-access pathways to advice and information and peer support across local kinship communities.

62. Did you receive any preparation support around being a kinship carer from the local authority either before or shortly after your child moved in?



63. Has the local authority offered you any support to help you to manage your child's contact with birth parents?



n=1191 (from n=1210 'Yes' response to Q24)

Only 1 in 5 kinship carers (21%) received any preparatory support from the local authority either before or shortly after the child moved in. While all prospective foster carers and adopters undertake often quite lengthy periods of training and preparation prior to taking on their caring role, kinship carers are far less likely to receive support around topics such as the complexities of raising a child who has experienced trauma and managing behavioural issues, for example, and often the training they do receive is inadequate and inappropriate for kinship carers.⁵⁵ Based on valuable learnings from our Kinship Ready preparatory workshops programme⁵⁶, we are delivering tailored online workshops for kinship carers as part of the national Peer-to-Peer Support Service to improve carers' knowledge and confidence in their caring role. These workshops will cover topics such as managing contact with birth parents, crucial given that only a quarter of kinship carers in our survey received support to help them manage contact.

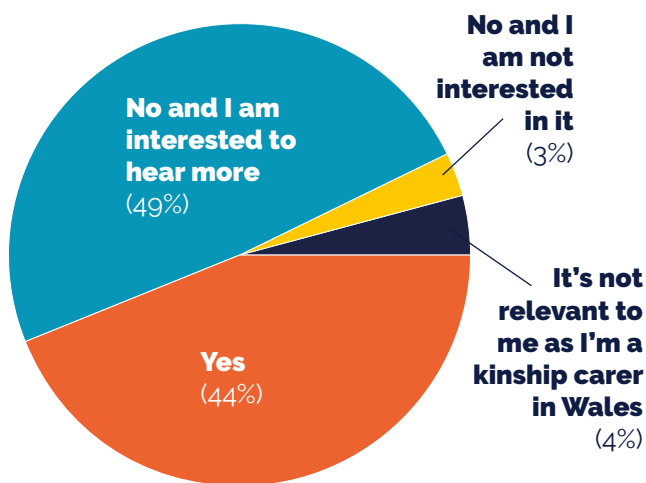
⁵⁵ MacAlister (2022)

⁵⁶ For more information visit kinship.org.uk/commission-our-services/kinship-ready.

Section H

Independent Review of Children's Social Care

64. Are you aware that the government in England commissioned an independent review of children's social care that was published this year and which made recommendations to government on how to improve support for kinship families?



65. The Review has made lots of different recommendations to government on how to improve support for kinship carers, some of which are below. If you had to choose one of these recommendations as the most important, which would you choose?

Response	Count	%*
A financial allowance for kinship carers to help cover the costs of raising a child (just like that given to foster carers)	1203	79%
Support for legal costs in the family court for kinship carers	91	6%
Paid leave from work for kinship carers when they take on the care of a child (just like that given to new adoptive parents)	89	6%
Preparation workshops and training for kinship carers to help them in their new role	55	4%
Free independent legal advice before becoming a kinship carer	49	3%
Peer support for kinship carers to meet and get support from other kinship carers in their local area	44	3%

n=1531

44% of respondents said they were aware of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England, likely much higher than would be expected amongst the typical kinship carer population as a result of Kinship's efforts to support our Kinship community to share their views and expertise with the Review over 2021 and 2022, and our promotion of the Review's recommendations for kinship care with this audience.⁵⁷

Overwhelmingly carers told us that, of the key recommendations from the Review around improving support for kinship carers, the most important one for them was the provision of a financial allowance to help cover the costs of raising a child (like that given to foster carers), although a significant minority opted for support for legal costs in the family court or paid leave from employment (like that given to adoptive parents). This likely reflects both the severity of kinship families' financial circumstances⁵⁸ as well as the importance of financial security on other aspects of life, including physical and mental wellbeing. We look forward to continuing to share the experiences and views of kinship carers with the Department for Education as it considers its response to the recommendations of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care before the end of 2022.

⁵⁷ For more information on Kinship's response to the recommendations made by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, a summary of recommendations and a snapshot of carers' views, visit kinship.org.uk/care-review.

⁵⁸ Kinship (2022)

Conclusion

The Cost of Loving brings together the views and experiences of over 1,500 kinship carers across England and Wales to highlight the urgent need for change. It is yet another illustration of the significant daily challenges facing kinship families and how existing policies and support services are completely insufficient to meet their needs.

The responses from our 2022 annual survey show that children growing up in kinship care often have high levels of need and experiences similar to other groups of children supported by children's services. We found that kinship carers and their children are struggling to access the health, educational and behavioural support they need, and that many kinship families are experiencing financial insecurity with signs of financial stress increasing. Consistent with the findings of previous annual surveys, this year's report uncovers how the provision of local authority support and information for kinship carers is inadequate, and outlines the risk of significant costs for children, families, and the state if immediate action is not taken.

Despite the ongoing struggles experienced by thousands of kinship families, we also find ourselves at a time of significant opportunity. These very carers, having demonstrated an unwavering commitment to their children, continue to act as agents of change and demand the changes they know will better support their families.

This report too shows the difference which kinship care makes to the lives of children across the country – the joy and celebration of family life. It makes sense to invest in kinship care, and an increasing number of decision makers in government, parliament, local authorities and

"At Kinship, we stand ready to hold these leaders to account and ensure they really do value the love of kinship carers."

beyond are understanding this and making strong commitments to improving policy and practice for kinship families.

Our recommendations make a strong and evidence-based case for how governments, local authorities and others can act with urgency to improve experiences and outcomes for the kinship families of today, as well as those of tomorrow. They echo the vision for kinship care articulated in our *Out of the Shadows* report published earlier this year and, in the wake of the recommendations from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England, push decision makers to deliver the changes which kinship families need.

At Kinship, we stand ready to hold these leaders to account and ensure they really do value the love of kinship carers. Every child needs love; it gives children certainty, reduces stress, anxiety and fear, allows children to concentrate on school work and build friendships, and grows confidence, self-esteem and happiness. For too long, that love has been undervalued. But this can – and must – change.

Recommendations

1) All kinship carers should receive the financial support they need, when they need it.

This should include equalising the provision of financial allowances between foster carers and kinship carers, ensuring carers receive an allowance that matches the current minimum fostering allowance to help them cover the unexpected costs of raising a child. Emergency financial support should also be made available when a child moves in to help them cope with initial additional costs. No family should be forced to stop caring for a child or prevented from taking on the care of a sibling due to financial worries. Targeted support should be considered to help kinship families through the cost-of-living crisis and prevent family breakdowns.

2) Kinship carers should have a right to kinship care leave on a par with adoption leave.

This will ensure kinship carers do not have to leave employment if they don't need to and supports a choice based on the needs of the child, reducing risk of financial insecurity. This would ensure carers have the time and space to understand their options and support the child to settle in.

3) Children in kinship care should receive targeted support in education and health.

This should reflect the similar needs and experiences between kinship children and other groups of children supported by children's services. They should have a statutory right to a mental health assessment like looked after children, and access to health and therapeutic support which helps them understand their family circumstances and deal with the impact of abuse, trauma and loss. All kinship children should also be eligible for Pupil Premium Plus as well as support from the Virtual School and a designated teacher at their school.

4) Local authorities should provide significantly improved support and services for kinship carers.

This should aim to equalise access to training, preparation and other support between foster

carers and kinship carers, but with services attuned to the specific needs of kinship families. It should include health and therapeutic support for carers to help them manage their own challenges, and support to help them manage issues around children's behaviour and family contact. All kinship carers should understand where and how to access peer support in their local area, and be signposted to wider services including those provided by the voluntary sector and organisations including Kinship.

5) All kinship carers should receive free and independent advice and information.

This should be clear and accessible from the point at which they are considering becoming a kinship carer. Carers should also have a right to legal aid to support with navigating the family justice system.

6) Further research should seek to understand the needs and experiences of specific groups of kinship families whose voices are underrepresented.

This should include carers and children from Black and other minority ethnic backgrounds as a priority, as well as younger kinship carers, children and carers with additional caring responsibilities, and informal kinship carers. The views and experiences of these families should be clearly reflected in the delivery of services and policies for kinship carers and their children, and organisations should make additional efforts to reach those typically missing or ignored.

7) The UK government should respond boldly and positively to the recommendations made by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England.

Kinship carers want to see strong action on financial support in particular. Many of the recommendations mark a significant shift in how we could support children to grow up within their families, and the government should push forward urgently with these reforms to children's social care.

About Kinship

Kinship, formerly known as Grandparents Plus, is the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales.

We're here for all kinship carers – the grandparents and siblings, the aunts, uncles, cousins and family friends who step up to raise children when their parents can't. We'll not rest until the recognition and support is there for every kinship family.

ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Last year, our advice service provided high-quality, specialist advice to over 3,600 kinship carers on issues including welfare benefits, housing, legal orders, financial support, employment, and contact with parents.

We have pioneered the development of evidence-informed support programmes for kinship carers including the national Peer-to-Peer Support Service in England. Through Kinship Ready, Kinship Reach and Kinship Connected, we provide kinship carers across the country with a range of workshops and both remote and local intensive 1:1 support led by dedicated project workers. Our services are proven to have a positive impact on kinship families, reducing isolation and concerns with children's behaviour, and improving relationships and carers' resilience. Evaluation of our Kinship Connected programme in 2020 found that a 20% return on investment was made by local authorities who invested in this support.

Our other innovative projects, including Someone Like Me and Kinship Young Champions, continue to provide kinship carers and the children they care for with new opportunities to meet and learn from each other, get the support they need, and make a difference to local and national policy and practice.

In 2022 we are rolling out a new national peer support service, funded by the Department for Education, which will support kinship carers in every local authority in England through a dedicated website and e-learning platform, online chat, free workshop series, and on-the-ground support to help kinship carers develop new peer support groups in their area.

POLICY, RESEARCH AND CAMPAIGNS

We are proud to work alongside kinship carers and local authorities to transform support at local and national level. Kinship plays a key role in raising awareness of kinship care and campaigning for policy and practice change, including leading on the organisation of Kinship Care Week each year. In 2022, we are launching the #ValueOurLove campaign which mobilises kinship carers and supporters, and calls on politicians to equalise support between kinship families and foster and adoptive families.

Our annual surveys and research activity bring the views and experiences of thousands of kinship carers directly to decision makers, and we support and empower kinship carers to become campaigners themselves. Together with our organisational expertise, we support government, local authorities and others to create real and lasting change for kinship families.

We also bring professionals and researchers together through our Professionals Network of over 1,000 social workers and other professionals working with kinship carers and our Kinship Care Researcher Network of over 60 academics.

References

APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2022) **Spotlight Inquiry**. London: Become.

Ashley, C. and Braun, D. (2019) **The Highs and Lows of Kinship Care: Analysis of a Comprehensive Survey of Kinship Carers**. London: Family Rights Group.

Carers UK (2019) **Facts & figures**. Accessed August 2022. Available at: <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/facts-and-figures>.

Children's Commissioner for England (2020) **Stability Index 2020**. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner for England.

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (2022) **Evaluation of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise COVID-19 Emergency Funding Package**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-covid-19-emergency-funding-package>.

Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care (2015) **Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of Looked-After Children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS England**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-looked-after-children--2>.

Department for Education (2021a) **Characteristics of children in need: 2020 to 2021**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2020-to-2021>.

Department for Education (2021b) **Children looked after in England including adoptions: 2020 to 2021**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2020-to-2021>

Department for Education (2022a) **Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2022**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2022>.

Department for Education (2022b) **Special educational needs in England: January 2022**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2022>.

Department for Education (2022c) **Permanent exclusions and suspensions in England: 2020 to 2021**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-exclusions-and-suspensions-in-england-2020-to-2021>.

Department for Education (2022d) **Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities, in England: 2020 to 2021**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/outcomes-for-children-in-need-including-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england-2020-to-2021>.

Farmer, E. and Moyers, S. (2008) **Kinship care: Fostering Effective Family and Friends Care**. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Grandparents Plus (2018) **State of the Nation Survey 2018**. London: Grandparents Plus.

Grandparents Plus (2019) **State of the Nation Survey 2019**. London: Grandparents Plus.

Harwin, J., Simmonds, J., Broadhurst, K. and Brown, R. (2019) **Special Guardianship: A Review of the English Research Studies**. London: Nuffield Family Justice Observatory.

Howe, D. (2005) **Child Abuse and Neglect: Attachment, Development and Intervention**. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Hunt, J., Waterhouse, S. and Lutman, E. (2008) **Keeping them in the family: Outcomes for children placed in kinship care through care proceedings**. London: BAAF.

Hunt, J. (2020) **Two Decades of UK Research on Kinship Care: An Overview**. London: Family Rights Group.

Kinship (2021) **Kinship Care: State of the Nation Survey 2021**. London: Kinship

Kinship (2022) **Out of the Shadows: a vision for kinship care in England**. London: Kinship.

Kinship (2022) **Kinship Care: Financial Allowances Survey 2022**. London: Kinship.

MacAlister, J. (2022) **The Independent Review of Children's Social Care: Final report**. London: Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

McGrath, P. (2022a) **Grandparents' Experiences of Being a Special Guardian: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**. PhD dissertation, University of East Anglia.

McGrath, P. (2022b) **Developing Good Practice in Financially Supporting Special Guardians: a guide for local authorities**. Commissioned by the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board. London: Kinship.

Office for National Statistics (August 2022) **Unemployment: UK unemployment figures. Information on the labour market, young people and workless households.** Figure for Apr-Jun 2022. Accessed August 2022. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment>.

Sacker, A., Murray, E., Lacey, R. and Maughan, B. (2021) **The lifelong health and wellbeing trajectories of people who have been in care: Findings from the Looked-after Children Grown up Project.** London: Nuffield Foundation.

Schoenwald, E., Smyth, E., Gwyther, J., O'Higgins, A., Briggs, E., Gurau, O. and Alam, A. (2022) **Understanding formal kinship care arrangements in England: Analysis of administrative data.** London: What Works for Children's Social Care.

Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., Thomas, S., Sinclair, I. and O'Higgins, A. (2015) **The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data.** Rees Centre, University of Oxford and University of Bristol.

Selwyn, J. Farmer, E., Meakings, S. and Vaisey, P. (2013) **The Poor Relations? Children and Informal Kinship Carers Speak Out.** University of Bristol and Buttle UK.

Starks, L. and Whitley, J. (2020) **An Evaluation of Kinship Connected for Grandparents Plus.** London: Grandparents Plus.

Wade J, Sinclair I, Stuttard J and Simmonds J. (2014) **Investigating special guardianship: Experiences, challenges and outcomes.** London: Department for Education.

Wayman, S., Raw, P. and Leadbitter, H. (2016) **'There's nobody is there – no one who can actually help?': The challenges of estimating the number of young carers and knowing how to meet their needs.** London: The Children's Society.

Wellard, S., Meakings, S., Farmer, E. and Hunt, J. (2017) **Growing Up in Kinship Care: Experiences as Adolescents and Outcomes in Young Adulthood.** London: Grandparents Plus.

Welsh Government (2021a) **Pupils with Special Educational Needs by local authority, region and type of provision.** Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Special-Educational-Needs/pupilssen-by-localauthorityregion-provision>.

Welsh Government (2021b) **Pupils present on census day by local authority and sector.** Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Pupils/pupilspresentcensusday-by-localauthorityregion-sector>.

Welsh Government (2021c) **Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from schools: September 2019 to August 2020.** Available at: <https://gov.wales/permanent-and-fixed-term-exclusions-schools-september-2019-august-2020>.

Welsh Government (2021d) **Children in need at 31 March by looked after status, category of need and disability, including unborn children.** Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-in-Need/childreninneed-by-localauthority-categoryofneed>.

Welsh Government (2021e) **Children starting to be looked after by local authorities, by need for care, year ending 31 March.** Available at: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenstartingtobelookedafterduringyearto31march-by-localauthority-needforcare>.

Wijedasa, D. (2015) **The prevalence and characteristics of children growing up with relatives in the UK: Characteristics of children living with relatives in England: Part I.** University of Bristol, Bristol.

Wijedasa, D. (2017) **Children growing up in the care of relatives in the UK.** Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies, University of Bristol. Policy Report 18.



ABOUT KINSHIP

Kinship is the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales. We're here for all kinship carers. The grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, other family members and friends who step up to raise children when their parents aren't able to. We want every kinship family to have the recognition, value and support they need and deserve.


We offer kinship carers financial, legal, practical and emotional support and understanding from the moment they need it, for as long as they need it. Our expert advice, information and guidance helps with complicated and stressful decisions that so many kinship families have to make. We're always there to support them through difficult times and celebrate the good.

Kinship carers are strong and determined. Together, they are powerful. We help them build communities of support and action by connecting families locally and across England and Wales.

We're at the heart of kinship networks, partnering with and influencing service providers, local and national government and other organisations. We give everything we have to fight for each family and their rights, changing society until every kinship family is recognised, valued and supported.

www.kinship.org.uk

 kinship.org.uk

 0330 016 7235

 info@kinship.org.uk

 [@kinshipcharity](https://twitter.com/kinshipcharity)

 [@kinshipcarecharity](https://facebook.com/kinshipcarecharity)