Co-producing research into kinship care

a practical toolkit

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Kinship

For family or friends who
step up to raise a child.

Lancaster University

cfj Centre for Child & Family Justice Research

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit was co-produced with 10 kinship carers who came together during 2023-25, pouring 'hope, love and care' into what became known as our 'research about research' project (thank you, **Sharon**). Huge thanks to **Charmain Betts**, **Ian Spence**, **Karen Friday**, **Kay Pitchford**, **Kieron Town**, **Libby Wattis**, **Marcia Gregory**, **Marilyn**, **Michelle Hall** and **Wendy Turner** for sharing such rich experience and expertise. You can find out more about them in the Appendix.

Thank you to our creative workshop facilitators **Laura Bradley**, former Participation and Involvement Manager at Kinship, and **Vickie Grey**, a Regional Programmes Manager at Kinship who has lived experience as a kinship carer.

Sketch artist **Mandy Johnson** (www.mandyjohnson.co.uk) captured the kinship carers at work and their ideas during the first and second workshops and her beautiful drawings are used throughout the toolkit.

We are also grateful to **Rachael Stemp**, Participation in Research Officer at Anna Freud, for her valuable contributions to our second workshop.

The project was funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account and the Department for Education with additional support from Kinship. The toolkit builds on and accompanies a linked report Co-producing Research into Kinship Care: a report into opportunities and challenges (Harwin et al, 2025).[1]

Our research team supported the workshops and toolkit development:

Vikkie Chapman, Transformation Manager & Executive Assistant, Kinship

Professor Judith Harwin, Professor in Socio-legal Studies, Co-director, Centre for Child and Family Justice Research

Sharon McPherson, Peer Researcher and Co-Director of Families in Harmony

Dr Lucy Peake, Chief Executive, Kinship

Clare Walsh, Peer Researcher

We hope the toolkit will inspire improvements in the way that kinship carers are involved in research about their families' experiences. And that new co-produced research will lead to greater understanding and support for kinship families in future.

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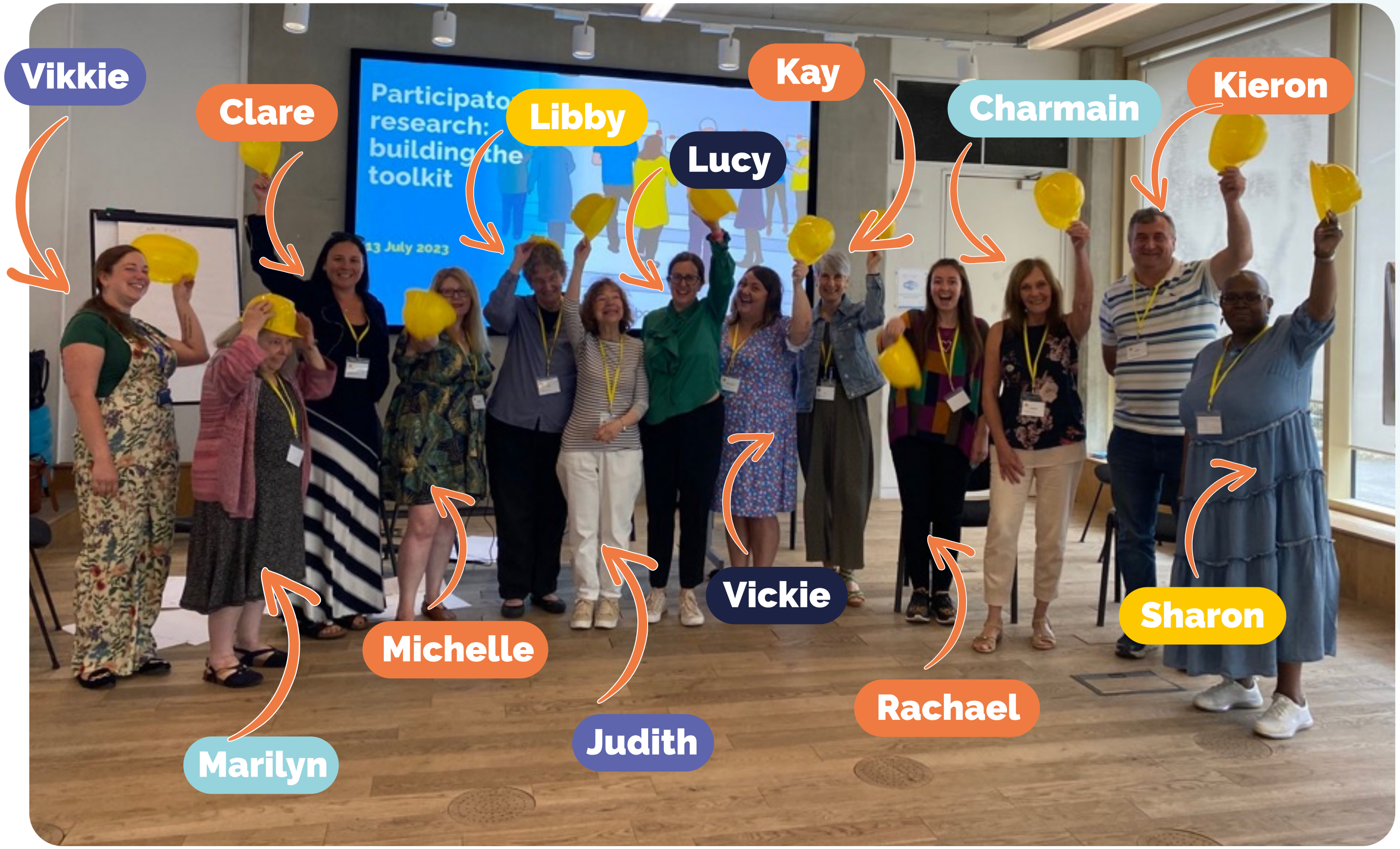
[1] Harwin, J., Walsh, C., Raja, A., McPherson, S., Peake, L., Yeomans, L.. (2025). Co-producing Research into Kinship Care: a report into opportunities and challenges. Lancaster University.

CONTENTS

1 Introduction to the toolkit and our approach



Ten kinship carers and a research team from the charity Kinship and Lancaster University co-produced this toolkit in three fun and creative workshops. The research team included peer researchers and workshop facilitators with experience as kinship carers.

The toolkit is part of a project focusing on improving the way that kinship carers are involved in research about their families' experiences and needs. It accompanies a research report *Co-producing Research into Kinship Care: a report into opportunities and challenges* (Harwin et al, 2025).

Co-producing the toolkit: the approach

"Nothing about us, without us"

The kinship carers who developed this toolkit were inspired by calls from disability rights campaigners for a *'Nothing about us, without us'* approach to research about their lives. The aim was to *consider meaningful opportunities for kinship carers to be involved throughout the research journey*.

The toolkit is designed to be an accessible and practical resource for researchers, kinship carers, policy makers, charities, local authorities, funders and other organisations that are involved in commissioning or undertaking research that shapes the design of support, services and policy for kinship families.

It includes principles and ideas to support kinship carers' participation and involvement in research alongside researchers based in universities, charities, local authorities or other insitutions.

2 First things first: understanding kinship care

In 2021, there were more than 130,000 children living in kinship care in England.[2]

Kinship carers have stepped up to raise a relative's or friend's child. The largest group are grandparents, but they can also be aunts, uncles, older sisters and brothers, cousins, or other family members and friends.

Different legal arrangements mean kinship carers experience systems differently – some may have interacted with the children's social care system, the family law system, the welfare benefits system.

Their legal arrangement usually determines the support available to them and their kinship children. It also varies depending on where they live. The majority are caring for children under an informal arrangement, and Black and Asian kinship carers are more likely to be in this group.

Informal kinship care arrangements are when a close family member or friend look after a child for a temporary or permanent amount of time. This arrangement is agreed privately with the parents and parental responsibility for the child remains with the parents.

Kinship carers with a Child Arrangements Order (CAO). Child Arrangements Orders are granted by the family court and determine who a child can live with and/or who a child can stay with and for how long. The kinship carer shares parental responsibility with the child's parents, or others with parental responsibility, until the age of 18 unless the court states otherwise. In 2014, Child Arrangements Orders replaced Residence Orders and Contact Orders.

Kinship carers with a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) have parental responsibility for a child up until the age of 18 following an order made by the family court. Kinship carers live permanently with their children but need permission from the court to make important decisions, such as changing the child's surname.

Kinship foster carers look after children who are "looked after" by the local authority following a voluntary agreement, if a child spends more than 24 hours in local authority care under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or if a Care Order is made by the family court.

Source: *National Kinship Care Strategy for England (2023)* [3]

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[2] Office for National Statistics (2023) *Kinship care inEngland and Wales: Census 2021.*
Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/articles/kinshipcareinenglandandwales/census2021 (Accessed: 6 March 2025).

[3] Department for Education (2023) *Championing kinship care: The national kinship care strategy.*
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/championing-kinship-care-national-kinship-care-strategy (Accessed: 6 March 2025).

3 Focus on the **why**: the case for involving kinship carers in research

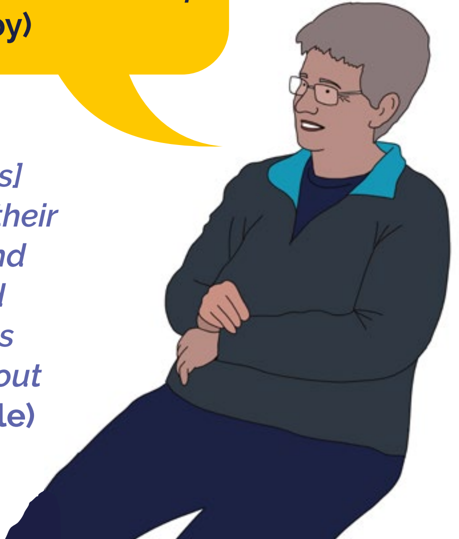
In the words of kinship carers...

"If carers aren't involved, then the research could be meaningless and totally miss the point. It would be like a pie without the filling." **(Kieron)**

"No two kinship experiences are the same. There are some cross over experiences; but sharing lived experience from kinship carers is imperative. There are situations that you would never have thought of or come across unless you'd heard it from a kinship carer." **(Karen)**

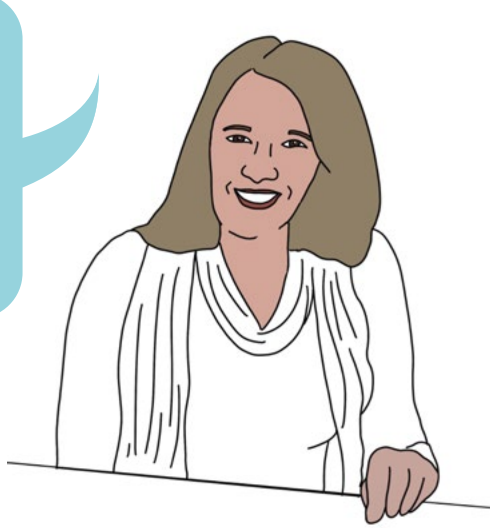
"As a researcher and former social care worker myself I understand that when you 'work with' people rather than 'do for' people, knowledge, understanding and outcomes are likely to be more powerful and effective. In research this could increase the impact of your project and also improve your understanding of what is important to kinship carers, informing further research." **(Michelle)**

"Involving us in their research projects is the best and probably the only way to find out what really happens in a kinship family." **(Libby)**



"[Kinship carers] are experts in their experiences and as such should be coproducers in research about them." **(Michelle)**

"Participatory research creates possibilitiesand results by understanding problems." **(Charmain)**



And funders rightly expect it. For example, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) has made inclusive research design a condition of funding.

"Becoming a more inclusive funder of research is one of NIHR's operating principles. We want to shift the dial on inclusion because it results in good science and generates knowledge that has the wider impact of benefiting everyone in society. " **(Professor Lucy Chappell, CEO, NIHR)**[4]

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[4] Inclusive research design to become an NIHR condition of funding | NIHR

4 Designing the toolkit

Together, we were proud to contribute an incredible 113 years' lived experience as kinship carers and 41 years' experience of kinship care research.

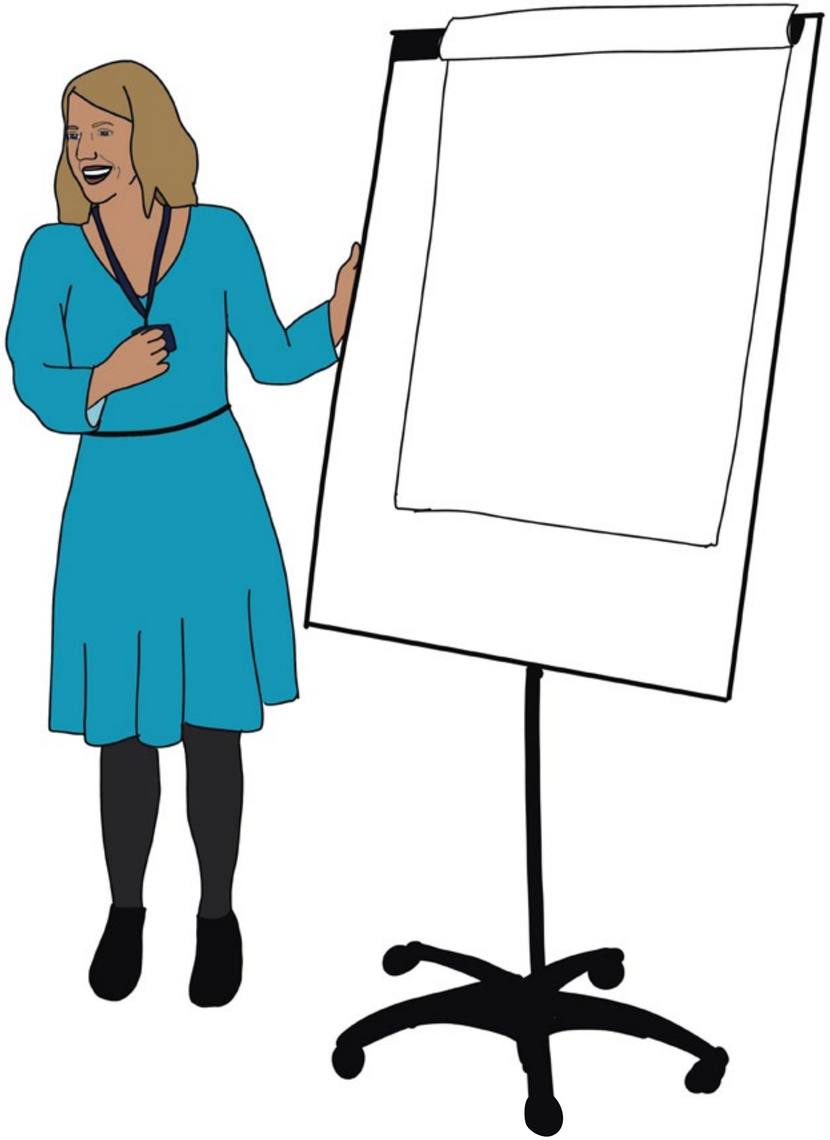
The toolkit was developed during 3 in-person workshops. The workshops were designed around fun themes (a building site and a farmyard) to make them engaging and memorable participatory expriences.

We also considered and built on evidence gathered through the *Co-producing Research into Kinship Care* project, including 3 online focus groups with kinship carers, a roundtable with 6 researchers about their experience of involving kinship carers in research, a literature review about participation approaches within research on kinship care, and examples of participatory research toolkits produced within social care and health sectors.

Key findings from *Co-producing Research in Kinship Care: a report into opportunities and challenges* (Harwin et al, 2025)

THE OPPORTUNITIES

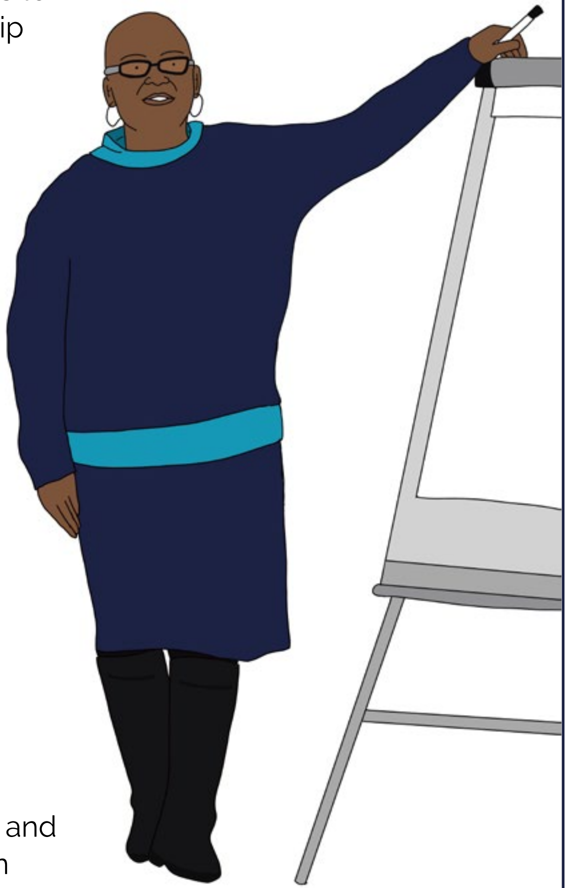
- Kinship carers and researchers wish to see the introduction of co-produced research that draws on kinship carers' lived experience. They believe co-production has the potential to create new highly relevant knowledge for service providers, policy-makers, practitioners, researchers and funders.
- Kinship carers feel they can potentially play a part in all types of research, subject to appropriate training, peer and organisational support, appropriate remuneration, and recognition of their own practical commitments.
- Kinship carers see commonalities in their families' experiences which cut across their legal arrangements. They challenge research which siloes the kinship carer community by legal order. There is an opportunity and urgent need for research to be more inclusive. This is an essential step towards addressing the marginalisation of informal kinship carers who are more likely to be from minoritised communities.
- The time is right to catalyse the development of co-produced research into kinship care. It is consistent with recent policy and legislative change that emphasises an inclusive approach to the kinship carer community.
- Some universities have developed pioneering initiatives to promote engagement with peer researchers and facilitate co-produced research. Although they are not targeted at kinship carers, they provide a useful framework that can be adapted and built upon.



Key findings from *Co-producing Research in Kinship Care: a report into opportunities and challenges* (Harwin et al, 2025)

THE CHALLENGES

- Kinship carers feel excluded from the opportunity to produce research that involves them from the get-go through to the final output and dissemination. They feel they are the objects of research and lack voice, influence and some have felt exploited to provide insights about themselves and their children.
- Kinship carers call for research to be more inclusive of the diversity of kinship carers. They consider the following groups under-represented:
    - Ethnic minorities
    - Younger kinship carers
    - Men
    - Kinship carers without Special Guardianship Orders, especially those in an informal arrangement
    - Those from rural communities
    - Those with a private law order
    - Those with fewer educational qualifications
    - Those who lack confidence and feel invisible, and that their experience is not valued.
- The kinship carers recognise that grandparents who are white and female feature most commonly in research about kinship care. However, even this group recognised that they have felt marginalised and patronised and want opportunities to co-produce research rather than to only be the subjects.
- There are specific issues that must be considered when involving kinship carers in co-produced research. These relate to: the multiple needs of the children they are caring for; the lack of financial, practical and emotional support they receive for their caring role; experiences of trauma; and the complex system they navigate. The impact of local authority assessments, family court processes and navigating systems that can feel biased against cultural practices, too often without the appropriate support, contribute to broken bridges of trust towards professionals and engagement in research activities.
- Engagement with universities can be hampered by their bureaucratic processes to employing and involving kinship carers as co-producers. A lack of access to digital devices, research training and library facilities are consistent and systemic obstacles that are at odds with university commitments to widen participation.
- Significant changes in research culture, infrastructure and practice are needed if co-production is to become a viable reality.
- All kinship carers and researchers emphasised the importance of trusted partnerships as a basis for supporting kinship carers to engage in research. Kinship carers trust the charity Kinship and feel it should play a lead role in enabling participation in research.



5 Getting it right: some principles for involving kinship carers in research

Look for opportunities to involve kinship carers in every stage of research

Our research journey highlights the multiple stages (or 'bus stops') where there are opportunities for kinship carers to be involved - for example, identifying a research idea, taking part in the research, ensuring that findings make a difference.

Involve kinship carers genuinely, be transparent and don't be tokenistic

'It's an equal partnership (or relationship), it must feel meaningful and be built on integrity.'

Think properly about how you want to involve kinship carers and why. Don't do things as an afterthought. Keep up communication, be clear about what you mean and be open about what carers can and can't be involved in.

Build trust and understanding

'We've been reviewed, assessed and often accused.'

Clearly explain who is conducting the research, its goals and funding sources. Be mindful that some kinship carers may be wary of professionals due to previous experience, and therefore may need extra reassurance and time to build trust.

Approach with empathy, respect and genuine interest in carers' experiences

'Feeling safe, supported and heard has been a profound experience after such a solo kinship ordeal.'

'Respect us and what we're doing. We've had years of experience.'

Value the perspectives and experiences of kinship carers, build meaningful connections and let them know they have been heard.

Avoid assumptions and judgements

'We are not 'second class citizens' and we do not need to be judged but assisted and guided with care on our challenging new life.'

Create an environment where kinship carers can share what they want to, without fear of being judged and stereotyped. This will help them feel supported and give you a more accurate understanding of the realities they face.

6 Understanding kinship carers and their motivations

'With me, not to me.'

'Participants, not subjects.'

Take time to understand what life is like for participating kinship carers and what their motivations might be. Each person will have had their own journey to get to this point and will be facing individual challenges. Use existing research to understand more broadly what some of these challenges might be, for example, Kinship's annual surveys of kinship carers.[5]

Be aware of the legacy of being 'investigated' that some kinship carers may feel from previous interactions with professionals.

'A large part of the kinship experience for myself and my grandchild regarding social services has left long-lasting trauma, added by people you turn to for help and trust, during a very vulnerable and threatening time of family life. Ignorance and improper practice by authority figures and practices, caused deep trust issues that affect social and personal relationships. Kinship carers are the pilot-in-control for all aboard this life-altering journey, so systems, solutions and support are essential.'

Remember that most kinship carers and children in kinship care don't have the same rights to support as foster carers and children in foster care. Many of them feel they have been struggling to access the support they and their children need for years. They may have needed to tell their story to professionals time and time again.

Be flexible and considerate of kinship carers' time. They may need to change arrangements at short notice because family must come first.

'It's not that we don't want to be there…life happens.'

Life is busy and challenging, but you've got a group of people who want to take part in research. Kinship carers have diverse personal and professional backgrounds, skills and experiences. Research is an opportunity to use existing skills and build new ones.

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[5] https://kinship.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/research/reports-and-publications/

Workshop participants said:

‘Research and academia is an area where I feel at home, where I thought I might have something to contribute.’

‘I wanted to do something a bit more me, before the kids came. Something stimulating, academic, professional.’

‘I have found the research journey fascinating and challenging. I found it asked questions of me that I had never considered beforehand. The group exercises have taken me well beyond my comfort zone but on reflection I needed that. It’s taught me to be more daring, more inquisitive and more open about my own feelings.’

‘I hope that more research will have a positive impact re local authorities and central government.’

They were motivated to contribute to research to make a difference for other kinship families.

‘I feel the more research is done, the better the understanding authorities and the public get to discover kinship care and what it means, and its impact on the carers and the children affected.’

‘It’s important that any research undertaken must be using kinship carers’ lived experience and with kinship voices.’

7 Involvement at every stage of the research journey

Kinship carers may want to be active participants at various stages of the research journey.

- If possible, give them a choice of participation options and include them in different stages of the research process.
- Think about what you need from kinship carers. Are you looking to employ peer researchers to support the research from design stage to impact? Or to support recruitment of focus group participants or interviewees? Or to reach and engage particular groups of kinship carers to complete surveys?
- Be clear around expectations – what's possible to dip in and out of and what needs more commitment?
- Offer, don't pressure. Make it clear that opting out is always an option.

Be up front about research aims and where funding comes from. Be aware of where meeting and fulfilling funding criteria may compromise kinship carer involvement. Avoid promises that cannot be kept.

Be mindful of how power dynamics may arise at different stages of the research and think about how you can balance them out.

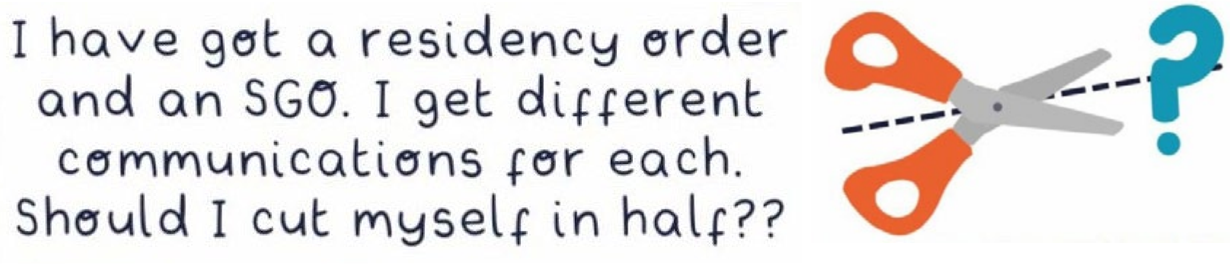
- Empower kinship carers to take part and treat them as equal partners in the research process, valuing their knowledge and experience.

- Avoid having an 'us and them' mentality.
- Take regular moments of reflection to recognise where they may be a power imbalance and consider what you can do to address it.
- Be aware the power dynamics will change depending on how kinship carers are participating.

8 How do we reach kinship carers?

Things to think about when designing research about kinship care

- Define who the research is about
- Be intentional about *who* you mean to include and why you are focusing on that group
- Think about the kinship carers and kinship families that you will be including and excluding
- Make sure you understand the group you are focusing on
- Remember that some kinship carers may have different legal orders for different children and think about whether that might have an impact on who you want to reach



Things to think about when designing a recruitment plan

- Think about how you will reach and engage the specific group you have identified
- Tailored approaches will be needed for some groups of kinship carers who have historically been less well-served by services and who have been less likely to be involved in research – such as informal kinship carers, Black and Asian kinship carers, sibling kinship carers and men
- Be realistic. Do you have the relationships you will need to recruit successfully? Is your organisation trusted by the kinship carers you wish to engage?
- If your research is dependent on other people and organisations supporting recruitment, approach them about the support you may need early on in your research planning and remember to consider the time and resources they may need
- Plan enough time and allow sufficient funding in your budget if you are going to involve peer researchers or ask charities or other groups to support recruitment into your study

Kinship carers come to research in different ways. Some may engage directly because of the research project, whereas some may be referred after accessing another service. Suggested sources for recruitment / routes to engage are:

- Word of mouth via kinship carers, in-person and online peer support groups, trusted organisations, community and faith groups
- Social media: WhatsApp, Facebook groups, etc. Remember to tailor your approach to focus on the social media platform your target group is most likely to use
- Organisations working directly with kinship carers in a focused way, including charities, local authorities, virtual schools, local organisations. They may have internal promotion or referral processes in place (for example to reach kinship carers who have accessed a service and who are also interested in research)
- Go to where the kinship carers are – don't expect them to just find you

Communicating your research participation opportunity

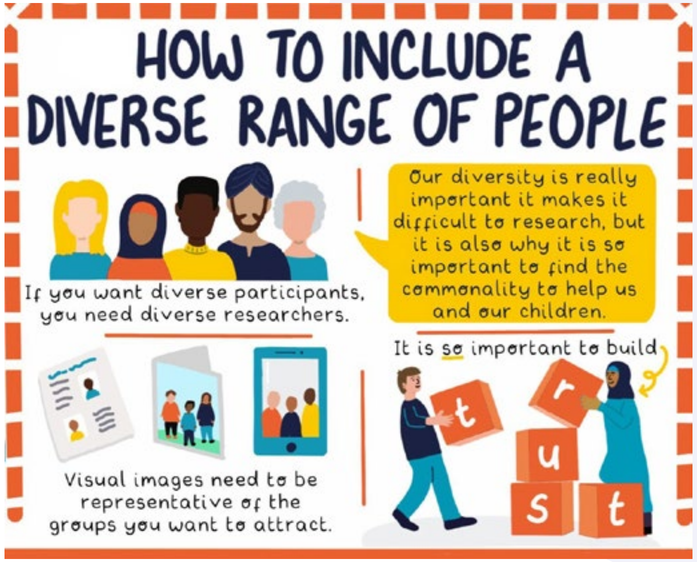
- Craft clear, jargon-free invitations that explain the research and its importance
- Think about the images you use. Show a diversity of kinship families
- Consider the language you use. For example, does your target group know they are 'kinship carers'?

Insight

A study about the experiences of Black and Asian kinship carers (Tah and Selwyn, 2025) found low awareness about the term kinship carer within some minority ethnic groups, particularly within the Asian community.

Initial recruitment materials with the question 'Are you caring for someone else's child?' did not always work because kinship carers saw their kinship children as their children. The study shifted to using the phrase 'children raised by relatives'.

https://kinship.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/research/raised-by-relatives/



Prioritise diversity and inclusion

'The greater diversity of input and lived experience will make sure all groups can be catered for and understood.'

- Have inclusive and diverse research teams. Include researchers from different backgrounds and cultures. Involve peer researchers with lived experience to help foster connection and understanding.
- Ensure consistency in the research team members to build trust and rapport.
- Encourage new people to get involved, to avoid the 'usual suspects' taking part in every kinship carer research opportunity.
- Community-led research – engage the wider community, including schools and local organisations, to reach more participants.
- Recognise if your group of participants isn't diverse and consider what you can do to address that.

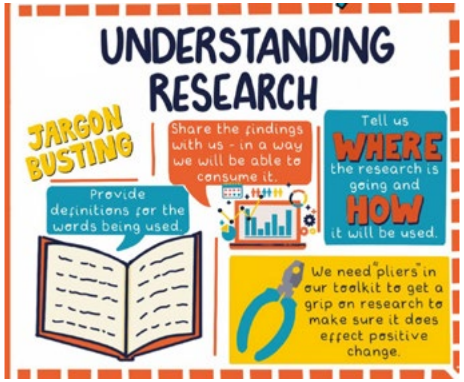
Resources for researchers

Developing a toolkit for increasing the participation of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in health and social care research Farooqi et al (2022)

EDI in research projects: a toolkit Cordis Bright (2023)

9 Barriers, obstacles and support

"We are not 'second class citizens' and we do not need to be judged but assisted and guided with care on our challenging new life."

Potential barriers and obstacles	**Ways to support kinship carers to overcome these**
Peer researchers may not be able to access what they need, for example, access to university library resources.	Universities could consider employing peer researchers, so they can access the same resources as other researchers.
Academic language may not be understandable for everyone.	Avoid jargon and use plain language to explain research goals and processes. No waffle! Provide a jargon buster / glossary of definitions. Use visual and audio aids to explain things, e.g. videos, podcasts and accessible imagery.
Kinship carers have differing levels of digital access and literacy.  	Offer one-to-one sessions for tech support if needed. Use questionnaires, online platforms and physical materials to cater to different comfort levels with technology.

Potential barriers and obstacles	**Ways to support kinship carers to overcome these**
Kinship carers may get triggered in conversations (and researchers may, too).  	Ensure all researchers are trained to use a trauma-informed approach. Build a safe space. Maintain regular contact. Put support systems in place, e.g. buddies, mentors, etc. Have debrief sessions and a follow-up process for aftercare. Signpost to additional support services and resources, for example: Free workshops and roadshows Peer support groups Someone like me – peer telephone support Helpful organisations
Research participation could be an unnecessary time drain due to caregiving responsibilities  	Respect kinship carers' time constraints and offer flexible opportunities. Acknowledge carers' lives – have flexible scheduling, offering multiple time slots and options for online or in-person participation. Use various methods to accommodate different preferences and time constraints.

Potential barriers and obstacles	**Ways to support kinship carers to overcome these**
Kinship carers may not have the finances to travel to in-person sessions.  	Cover travel expenses and if possible, buy travel tickets for participants in advance. Offer ways to participate online.
Kinship carers may feel intimidated / find it hard to have their say in large groups.	Use smaller breakout sessions for more in-depth discussions.
Kinship carers may feel judged and/or misunderstood. There may be legacy trust issues from previous experiences with professionals.  Participants were encourage to wear different hats to explore areas of the research journey. One area explored was their feelings and instincts about participating in research projects. 	Avoid assumptions and judgements: Have an individualised approach, recognising the uniqueness of each carer's situation and avoid stereotypes. Be mindful of your unconscious bias. Change the perception from hard-to-reach to under-served. Have open conversations.
Kinship carers may have additional needs, including those that aren't visible.	Choose convenient locations and accessible buildings for in-person sessions. Ask kinship carers about any additional needs they have and how you can support them best to participate
Kinship carers are telling stories about their children, assessing the risks of what they disclose. There is a worry that participating in research might be a risk to their families and therefore require high levels of confidentiality.  	Communicate about the right to withdraw. Provide options for anonymous participation to reduce fears of identification. Be aware of safeguarding issues. Ensure all information is kept confidential and secure. Clearly explain to participants how data will be protected. Have clear rules around boundaries, especially when using case studies.

10 Thanking and valuing

“Our time is valuable. We want to feel appreciated too.”

“I have felt accepted and valued, and am delighted to be an ‘expert by lived experience’ in kinship care and special guardianship.”

Ensure carers know their views are valued and important. Acknowledge their input, expertise and the time they have taken out of their lives to take part.

Give people choices about how they’d like to be acknowledged. For example, choice of name (full name, first name, initials) / photo (or avatar or outline) in research outputs.

Talk to carers about where anonymity may be needed. For example, to safeguard their children.

Consider financial incentives and where it may be appropriate to offer remuneration. For example, it may be appropriate to offer employment to a peer researcher or to offer a voucher to someone taking part in a focus group (see *Useful resources and guidance*)

Ensure kinship carers are made aware there can be implications on welfare benefits and tax.

Useful resources and guidance on developing participation policies and remunerating those who contribute their lived experience to develop research, policy and practice

SCIE guidance
https://www.scie.org.uk/co-production/supporting/paying-people-who-receive-benefits

NIHR guidance
https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/Payment-for-Public-Involvement-in-Health-and-Care-Research-A-guide-for-organisations-on-determining-the-most-appropriate-payment-approach/30838

NICE policy
https://www.nice.org.uk/get-involved/our-committees/what-lay-members-do/lay-member-payments-and-expenses

A best practice guide/toolkit has been produced by The Social Change Agency for the sector that provides comprehensive information and advice for organisations developing participation policies
Payment for Involvement Playbook (thesocialchangeagency.org)

Introduction to co-production and participatory research: Workbook
Cardiff University in partnership with Alain Thomas Consultancy and the Communities First Support Network

11 Sharing the impact

Think about how you will share findings and how they will be used. Consider the long-term impact as well as immediate needs.

What outcomes will there be from your project? How can you communicate this in different ways or different audiences?

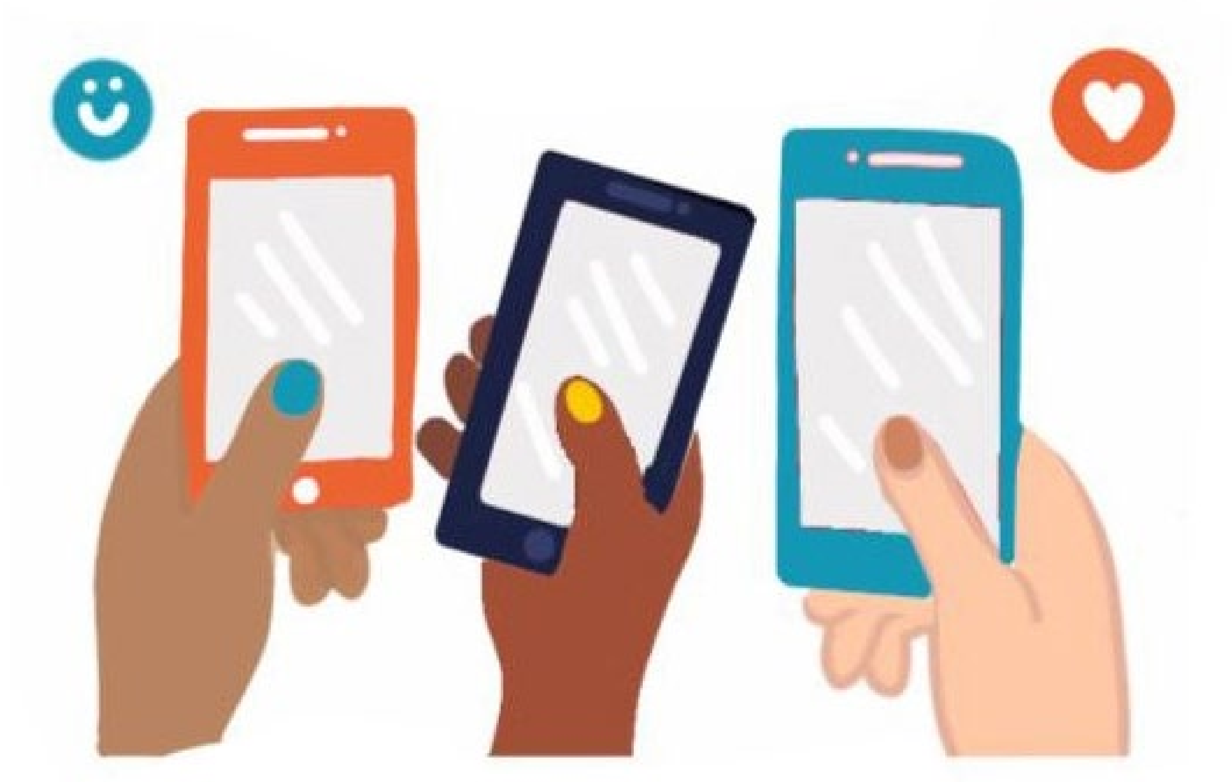
> *'Keep us informed about what may be produced from our input: thesis, media, resource kit, reviews, etc.'*

> *'The more research [that is] carried out will hopefully lead to better outcomes and recognition of the invaluable contribution that kinship carers make.'*

12 Final thoughts: involve kinship care experienced children and young people in research about their lives, too

This toolkit is part of a project that was funded to explore kinship carers' participation in research.

It led to lots of thinking about why and how kinship carers should be involved in research about their lives. We want to see a step change in the way kinship carers are involved. But we also want to call on researchers, charities, policy makers and funders for greater focus on making sure that children and young people with experience of growing up in kinship families are involved, too.



Appendix 1: Pen portraits

Here's a short introduction to some of the kinship carers who developed the toolkit.

WENDY

I am a kinship carer of two grandchildren. I became a carer almost 16 years ago.

By working with other kinship carers we can identify the ways of engaging and encouraging research participation and how we would like the outcomes presented (format). To enrich kinship care experience for those to come, to shape policies to enhance their lives both carers and kinship children and to raise awareness.

IAN

I have been a special guardian, with my wife, for over 12 years for our grandson.

I hope this project will heighten people's awareness of kinship care and see that we are the side of the children's care iceberg that lies beneath the water and is never seen. The more research is done the better the understanding authorities and the public get to discover kinship care and what it means, and its impact on the carers and the children affected.

KAREN

I am a kinship carer together with my husband, of two of our grandchildren. We have been kinship carers for nearly eight years.

I hope this project will open the eyes of all those involved; to change policies and procedures right from the start of the process and ongoing. Get greater awareness of the roller coaster ride kinship carers are on – the highs and the lows. To recognise kinship carers in our own right as the invaluable carers that we are. To share advice and support to other kinship carers, so they don't struggle with something we have already come across.

I would like to see positive change for the future.

CHARMAIN

I am a kinship carer to my granddaughter.

I hope all kinship carers will receive respect and recognition for their input. They need to know that big or small, their scrap of wisdom will add to this quilt we're making together so carers will see "we've got you covered".

This project can spur interest in many more much needed discussions and decisions about investing in real, relevant solutions and support.

MARILYN

I'm a grandmother special guardian along with my partner to our granddaughter, who has been with us for 13 years.

I'm hoping that attention can be drawn to the negative and traumatic nature of the difficult journey to becoming a kinship carer. I hope to influence future policy to the benefit of all kinship families.

Kinship carers can play an active part in research programmes and improve their lives and those of their kinship children.

LIBBY

We became kinship carers when our grandchildren arrived suddenly and unexpectedly one afternoon.

I hope this project will help to facilitate quality, effective research into kinship care.

I recommend other kinship carers get involved in research projects because it's fun. Because it may contribute to change. Because as kinship carers we have experience that nobody else has and it needs to be shared.

KIERON

I am a special guardian with my wife to our three grandchildren.

I would recommend other carers be involved in research wholeheartedly. This is so that the research can include more experiences and more carers' voices. Carers could benefit in a number of ways, just by being in the room with similar experienced people is a massive benefit in itself, but to then share those experiences and help shape a project is satisfying and delivers a sense of achievement.

MICHELLE

I have been a special guardian to my grandson for 10 years.

As a special guardian researcher this project's aims and ideas meant a lot to me. Kinship carers are the experts in how themselves, their kinship children and their families are affected. Being involved in research can ensure your voice and story is heard by those who can make change happen.

About the Centre for Child and Family Justice Research at Lancaster University

The Centre for Child and Family Justice Research (CfJ) is an interdisciplinary research centre co-hosted by the Department of Sociology and the Law School at Lancaster University.

The Centre is co-directed by Professor Karen Broadhurst OBE and Professor Judith Harwin. The overarching aim of our work is to inform and improve justice for children, youth and families. Our work spans family, youth and criminal justice and intersects with health and care. Central to our work is collaboration with a range of national and international policy and practice organisations. We involve children, youth and families in all our work.

Our Aims:

- To provide a supportive and vibrant scholarly environment for child, youth and family justice researchers, nationally and internationally
- To improve the transparency and accountability of justice systems by advancing empirical and theoretical knowledge
- To pioneer innovative solutions that drive effective and compassionate practice
- To collaborate with policy and practice colleagues, children, youth and families to set, revise and inform policy agendas
- To progress new standards for methodological rigour and innovation in interdisciplinary research
- To improve care and justice for families.

https://www.cfj-lancaster.org.uk/

About Kinship

We are Kinship. The leading kinship care charity in England and Wales. We're here for kinship carers – friends or family who step up to raise a child when their parents aren't able to.

We are made by and for our community of kinship carers. For too long they have been isolated without the help they need.

Our purpose is to change lives, and change the system.

We support, advise and inform kinship carers. Connecting them so they feel empowered.

Because a child needs the love and warmth of a thriving family.

We develop research, campaigns and policy solutions. Creating positive change across society.

Because for kinship families, love alone is not enough.

And as we see momentum building for change, we keep working with our community and making impact.

Join us. Together, let's commit to change for kinship families.

www.kinship.org.uk

Kinship is the working name for Grandparents Plus, which is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales under number 4454103 and registered as a charity under number 1093975.
Registered office: The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR.