

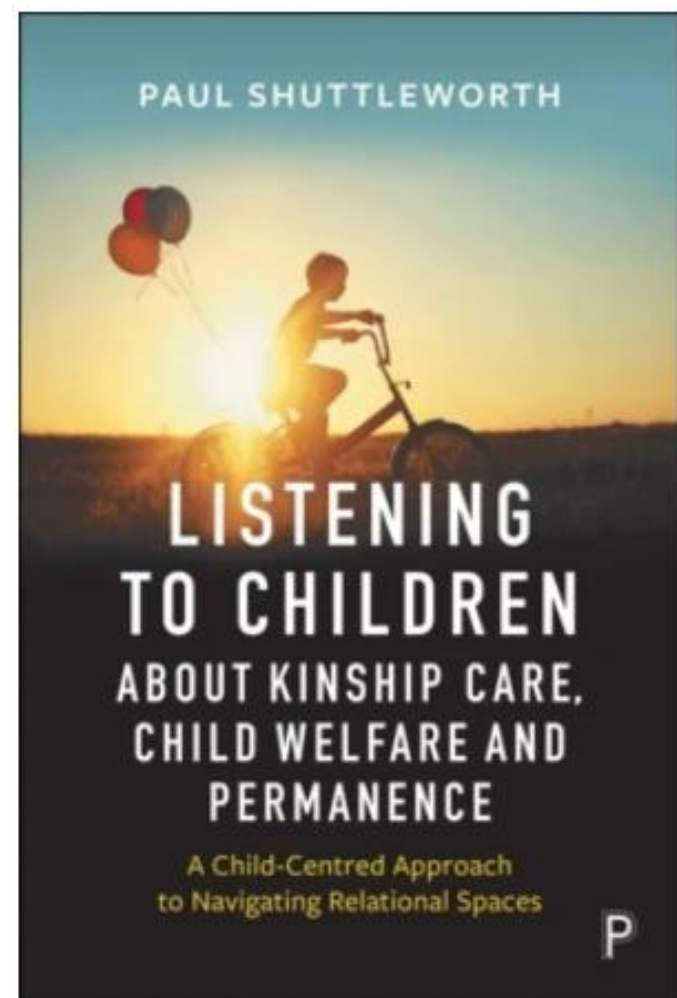


For family or friends who
step up to raise a child.

Knowledge Exchange Participation Workshop : Rose + Tim



Listening Space



[Free to download](#)



“Many may see the diagram [c.35 values] as the findings of the research. However, this is just the start of the findings, not the end. It is crucial to reflect on what such themes and insights really mean.”

Shuttleworth's research reminds us that children and young people often talk about **small, relational things** - being listened to, feeling safe, being treated fairly, having fun, being respected - long before they talk about services, systems, or plans. These cards are designed to **help hold the space** for those conversations.

An Invitation

This is not an assessment or a checklist. There are no right or wrong answers. This is about **listening, noticing, and learning**.

Questions to explore together

- Which of these cards resonate with you?
- Which cards connect with you and feel right, right now?
- Are there any that surprise you?
- Are there any you're curious about or want to know more about?
- Are there any missing? You can use the blank cards to write in words, feelings, or ideas that matter to you but aren't there yet.

Kinship

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

Listening spaces: Nottinghamshire

Being there no matter what

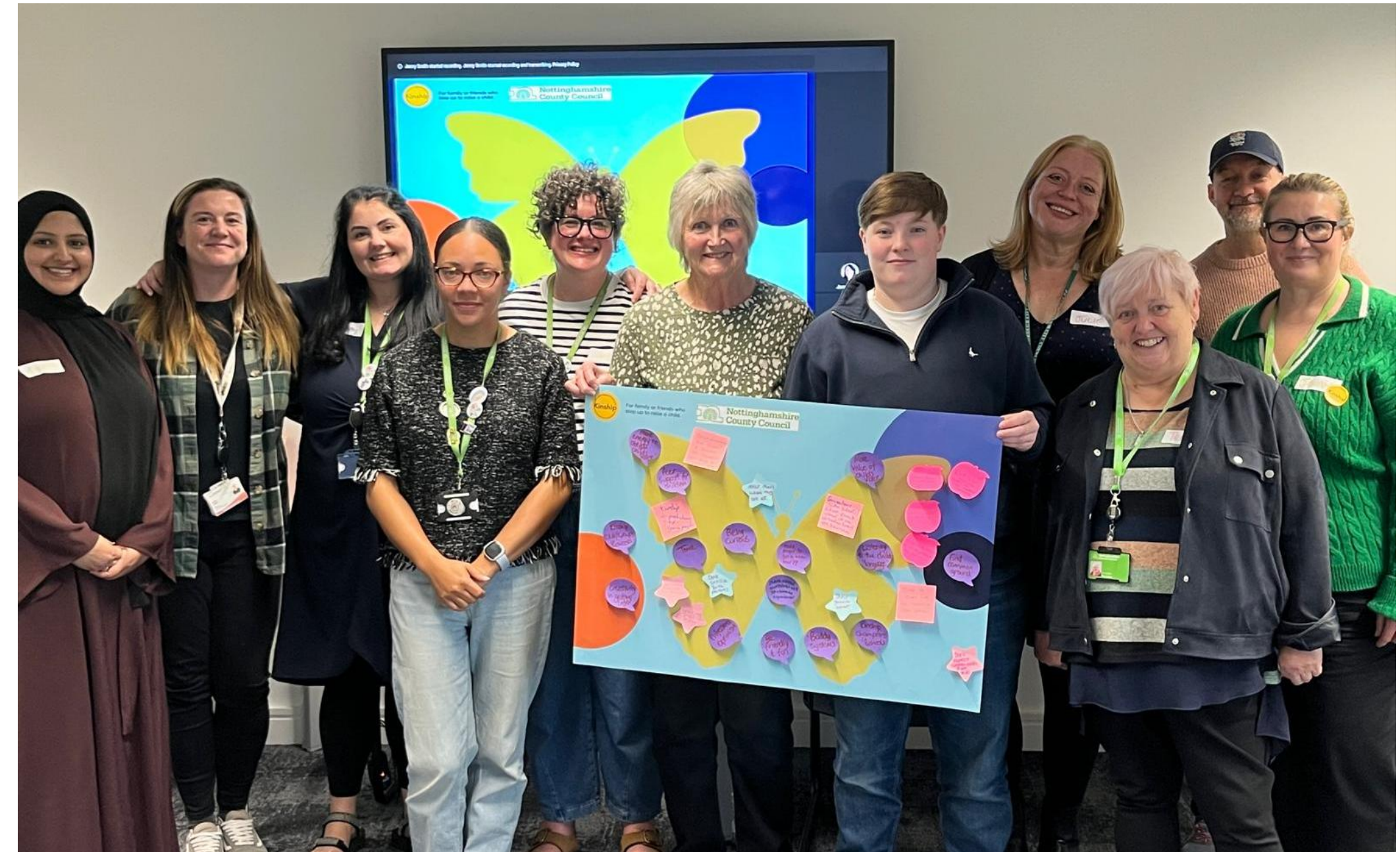
- *“There is a difference between being there and being there for a reason”*
- Unconditional love, cuddles, food
- Thoughtfulness

Knowing what’s happening

- Honesty within parameters
- Timeliness
- Interaction with the value of privacy

Awareness of kinship carer needs

- Aging carers



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

Listening spaces: Slough



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

Listening spaces: Kinship offices

Role of the social worker and professionals

- An 'offer' is not day-to-day practice
- Sense of not being believed or liked
- Cultural differences in disciplinary practices

Feelings around birth parents

- Anger around behaviours that led to the placement
- Compassion and hope for separate support

Awareness of complex experiences and systems



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

SESLIP · COMMUNITY SURVEY

Listening to kinship carers and families

Families raising children with relatives and close family friends · Southeast region · May 2026

162

kinship carers responded

19

local authorities

695

open-text responses

"Rich narrative insight into carers' lived experience and concrete ideas for service improvement."

9 QUESTIONS COVERING

- Top priority areas for support
- What has worked well and what has been hardest
- Confidence with legal situation, entitlements and professionals
- Less-heard voices and what would help them be heard
- How well the local authority understands their family
- How they hear about kinship support
- Outcomes that would make the biggest difference
- What decision-makers most need to understand

LESS-HEARD VOICES

44% 72 of 162 kinship carers

Identified with at least one characteristic:

Young carer

Minority ethnic

Disabled

Male

Sibling carer

EAL

Not related by blood

48% informal carers — no court order

"A system that reaches some families far more effectively than others."

LESS-HEARD VOICES · 72 KINSHIP CARERS · 44%

- Young kinship carer
- Black, Asian, Roma, Traveller or minority ethnic
- Disabled carer
- Male carer
- Sibling / niece / nephew carer
- English not first language
- Not related by blood

OTHER KINSHIP CARERS · 90 · 56%

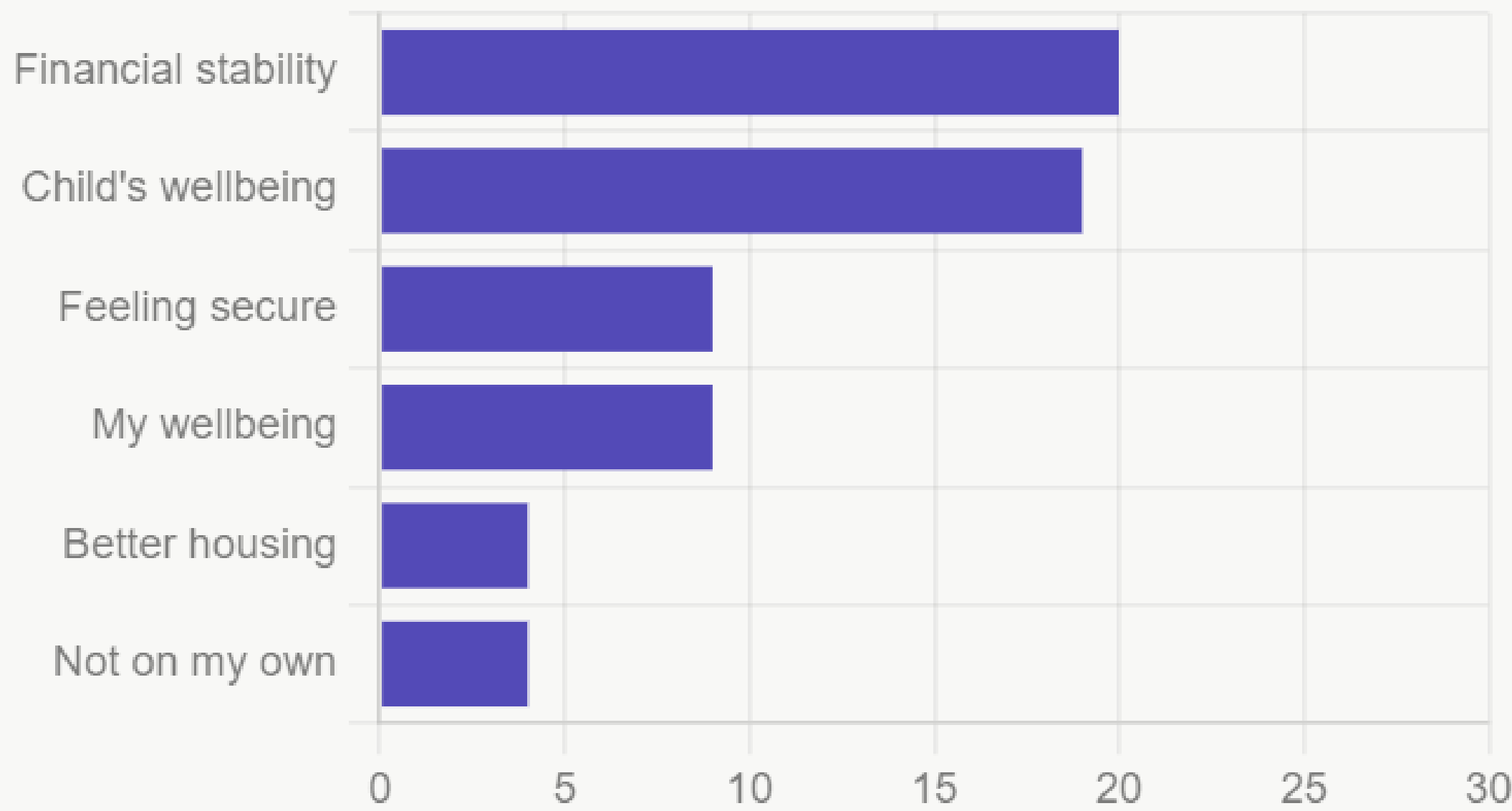
Selected "none of these" or preferred not to say.
Typically grandparents in longer-established, formal arrangements. The default image of kinship care.

When asked to choose their top priority, less-heard voices split almost evenly between financial stability and child wellbeing. Other Kinship carers chose child wellbeing by nearly three to one.

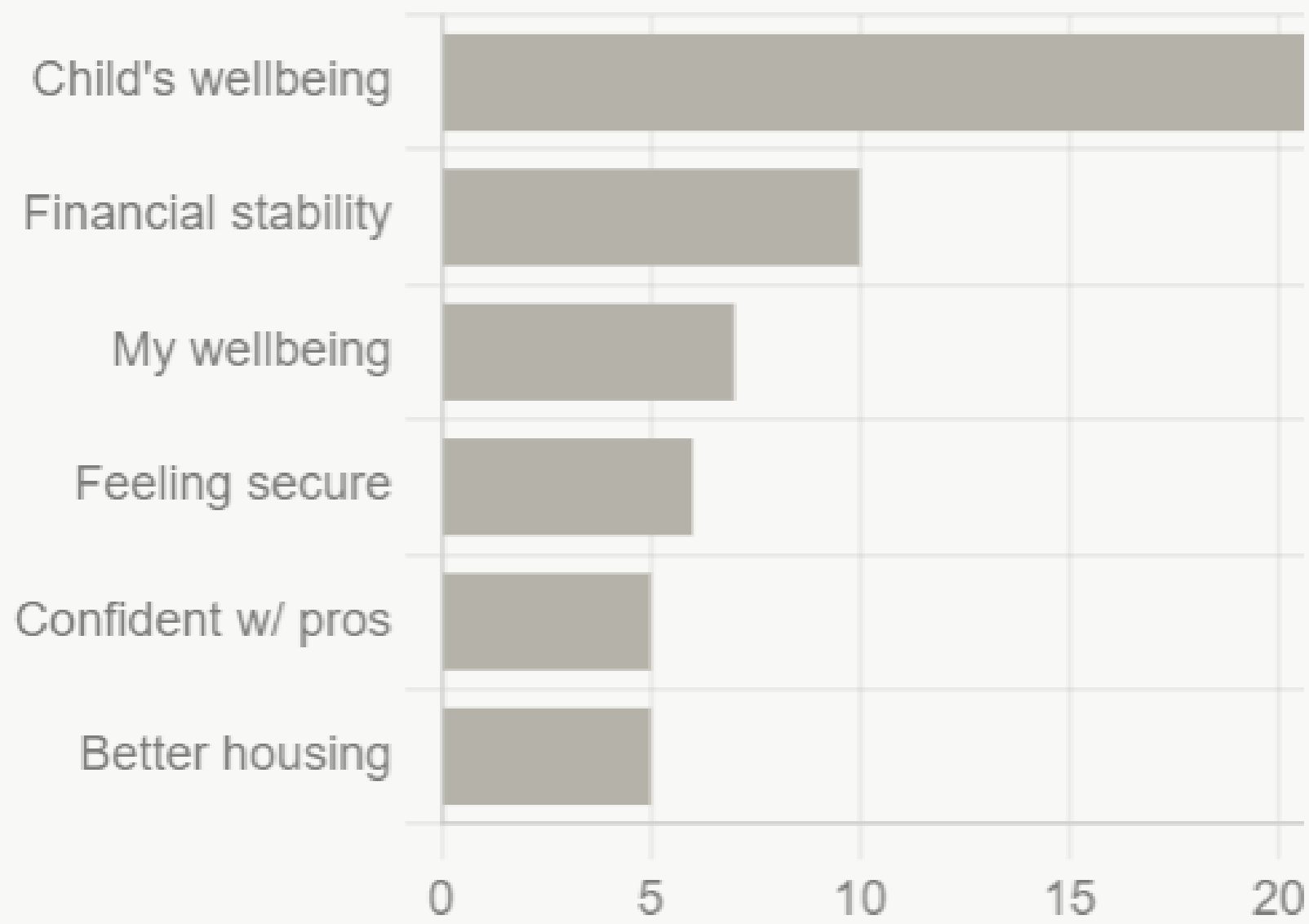
The gaps are consistent. Only 33% feel their LA understands them (vs 45%). Just 17% feel decisions are explained clearly - less than one in six. School support matters more (44% vs 30%). Even peer connection, knowing they are not alone, registers lower, perhaps not because it matters less, but because more urgent needs crowd it out.

The biggest divergence: less-heard voices put financial stability first more often than child wellbeing. For other kinship carers, child wellbeing dominates decisively. This suggests less-heard voices face more acute financial pressure that competes directly with focusing on their child.

Less-heard voices — priority 1 (n=72)



Other kinship carers — priority 1 (n=70)



Less-heard voices and other kinship carers

Knowing where to go

26% less-heard voices

41% other kinship carers

15 percentage point gap

Decisions explained clearly

17% less-heard voices

30% other kinship carers

13 percentage point gap

Child's voice taken seriously

20% less-heard voices

25% other kinship carers

Also lowest-scoring overall

Less-heard voices in sample

44%

72 of 162 respondents

Other kinship carers

56%

"none of these" or prefer not to say

Characteristics identified

7

categories, multi-select

Who is included in less-heard voices

Young kinship carer

Black, Asian, Roma, Traveller or minority ethnic background

Disabled carer

Male carer

Sibling / niece / nephew carer

English not first language

Not related by blood

Informal vs Formal arrangements

Theme	Informal	Formal
Being invisible — LA unaware they exist	Stronger ↑	Less prominent
Postcode lottery / inconsistency of financial support	Stronger ↑	Present
What happens to young people at 18 / housing / leaving care	Stronger ↑	Less prominent
HAF clubs, school holidays, EHCP access restricted to LAC only	Stronger ↑	Less prominent
Employer leave — no equivalent to maternity / foster carer leave	Informal only	Not raised
Universal Credit / benefits navigation	Informal only	Not raised
Post-order support gap	Present	Stronger ↑
Legal gaps — private court proceedings, no representation	Less prominent	Stronger ↑
Forensic financial assessments — intrusive and unfair	Less prominent	Stronger ↑
CAMHS / therapeutic support access	Present	Stronger ↑
Named contact / check-in post-order	Present	Stronger ↑
Information withheld about child's history at point of placement	Less prominent	Stronger ↑

KINSHIP CARER PARTICIPATION — ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

Kinship carer council — online reflective session

Following the survey, a group of kinship carers from across the Southeast were invited to come together online to review the findings and reflect on their own experiences. This session provided a rich layer of lived experience to sit alongside the survey data — kinship carers responding directly to the themes, confirming what rang true, and adding nuance that numbers alone cannot capture.

12

kinship carers participated

>50%

identified as
less-heard voices

SGO · fostering · informal

range of arrangements represented

Post-order support gap confirmed

"Once you've got a special guardianship, you've just forgotten. There's nobody there. There's nobody to explain anything to us."

"It's not till a little while later you start picking up the fragments."

Every kinship carer in the group confirmed the experience of being abandoned after the order — consistent with the 35 survey responses raising this theme.

Inequality with foster carers — not just financial

"It's not parity financial — it's parity across the board."

"If we'd been foster carers, we would have been given a lump sum, respite, a dedicated social worker. None of that, apparently, because we're kinship."

Kinship carers were emphatic that the inequality extends beyond money — to training, respite, therapeutic support, and a named worker.

Kinship carers council

The crisis of becoming a kinship carer

"When you're first going through it, you're emotional and you sometimes don't actually understand the impact these things are going to have on your life."

"We were given 15 minutes with a solicitor. Probably one of the most important decisions of our life."

Multiple kinship carers described becoming a kinship carer in acute crisis — with no preparation, incomplete information, and no time to make informed decisions.

CAMHS and therapeutic support

"It's only when you get those extremes of behaviour — suicide attempts — that you actually get into the inner sanctum. And then, ludicrously, they won't give therapeutic support in case it goes wrong."

"Between the crisis arising and getting access to a professional that can actually help — not just protect the professional — it takes so long."

Kinship carers described a CAMHS system that responds only to crisis, then withholds therapy while in crisis — and releases children without ongoing support.

Asking for help feels dangerous

"You want to be able to ask for help without feeling threatened by the risk of asking for help."

"I always wanted to ring up and ask. It would just be nice if we could make a phone call and ask."

"You need support from a professional who can guide you — without finding yourself in the middle of the safeguarding team."

A striking theme: the very act of seeking support risks triggering scrutiny, safeguarding referrals, and professional judgment — so carers don't ask.

Invisibility — not knowing you're a kinship carer

"You don't know you're a kinship carer, so you don't know how to find help — you don't know what to call yourself when you put yourself into Google."

"For us it was like 2 years before finding things out — just by chance, by joining communities."

Several carers — including one who came to kinship care from overseas — described years of complete invisibility to services, discovering support entirely by accident.