

# KINSHIP CARE, COMMUNITY, AND CULTURE

## Research protocol for qualitative study

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<b>Type of project</b>	Qualitative study using interviews and creative methods
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# Summary

## Introduction

Kinship care, in which children are raised by relatives or close family friends rather than their parents, represents a substantial proportion of out-of-home care arrangements. 1.1% of children aged 17 and under in England and Wales are thought to be living in kinship arrangements. Despite the high prevalence, the experiences of children and young people in kinship care remain under-researched, particularly those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. The perspectives of minoritised ethnic children and young people in kinship care – including their needs, challenges, sources of support, and the factors that enable or hinder access to this support – are largely unknown. This evidence gap is especially concerning at a time of significant sector activity following the implementation of the National kinship care strategy,<sup>1</sup> when service development and policy reform are actively underway. There is therefore an urgent need to generate robust, child-centred evidence to inform ongoing service development and to ensure racial inequalities are considered within future kinship care services and reforms.

Each series of workshops will broadly explore everyday experiences of kinship care, challenges and sources of support, and participants' recommendations for future policy, practice, and research. These areas are intentionally open to allow children and young people to shape the direction of discussion.

## Methods

Families in Harmony and CASCADE will co-lead this research. The study is a co-produced, qualitative, creative methods study, aimed at exploring the experiences of children and young people (aged 7–25) with experience of being in kinship care with families who do not share all of their ethnic or cultural heritage. Peer researchers employed from the beginning of the project will play an active role in recruitment, engagement, and supportive trust-building with families. The children and young people participating in the workshops will also guide and shape the study by feeding into the methods that are used and the team's interpretation of the data. The project team will also meet with an advisory group four times across the year during various stages to discuss progress and input into design and delivery.

The study will involve 18 in-person workshops, on three days over school holidays across the year, in two locations: the Bristol and Bath area, and London. These sites were selected due to the research team's established relationships with local authorities and third sector organisations, though participant recruitment is not limited to these areas. The sample size aim for the study is between 30 and 36 children total, distributed across the workshops (five or six per age group per site). In the workshops, there will be three sessions for various age bands, chosen to reflect

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/championing-kinship-care-national-kinship-care-strategy>



common school classifications: primary (aged 7–11), secondary (aged 12–17), and higher education (aged 18–25).

During the in-person workshops, children and young people will be offered a variety of creative activities, which will act as prompts for discussion; they will then be asked if they would like to speak to the research team about what they have made. In between the in-person workshops, children will receive a journal they can add pictures to and write in, alongside online ‘keeping in touch’ sessions to continue to develop trusting relationships with the children and young people, as well as member checking our interpretations of their discussions.

The data produced will consist of audio recordings of the children and young people discussing and explaining their creations, which will be transcribed verbatim. Images of the children and young people’s work may also be photographed to be presented alongside their descriptions. Collaborative coding will be carried out on the text-based data, applying intersectional principles based on the child or young person’s identities and social position. This will avoid homogenising minoritised ethnic children and young people into one group.

Outputs from this research will be considered to maximise impact and ensure accessibility. A project report will be published by Foundations at the end of the study, bringing together the findings in an accessible way. At least one peer-reviewed journal article on the findings will be written and accessible summaries will be developed and made available to the public.

Coproduction will continue through dissemination, and we will develop resources such as short films, animations, or other creative formats. Findings will be disseminated through professional and practitioner focussed platforms and shared directly with local authorities. They will inform teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

This protocol acknowledges and proposes mitigation for potential risks, including recruitment challenges and staff illness.

## **Timelines**

The project runs from January 2026 to February 2027. Data collection workshops will take place in the school holidays between May 2026 and October 2026. Data analysis will be conducted between June 2026 and December 2026, followed by member checking with participants. Findings will be written and reported by February 2027.



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## Background and problem statement

Kinship care, in which children are raised by relatives or close family friends rather than their parents, represents a substantial proportion of out-of-home care arrangements. In 2024, within foster care in England, 16% of children were living with a family or friend who had been assessed as a foster carer, and more children left care on a Special Guardianship Order (3,860 children), usually made to someone within a child's family network, than through adoption (2,980 children) (Coram BAAF, 2025). More widely, kinship care is very common outside of social work intervention. Estimates from the most recent census in England indicate that, of all children aged 0 to 17 years living in households of five people or fewer, 1.1% were living in kinship care (121,000 children) (ONS, 2023).

Despite the high prevalence, the experiences of children and young people in kinship care remain under-researched, particularly those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. The perspectives of minoritised ethnic children and young people in kinship care – including their needs, challenges, sources of support, and the factors that enable or hinder access to this support – are largely unknown. This evidence gap is especially concerning at a time of significant sector activity following the implementation of the National kinship care strategy, when service development and policy reform are actively underway. There is therefore an urgent need to generate robust, child-centred evidence to inform ongoing service development and to ensure racial inequalities are considered within future kinship care services and reforms.

This study adopts a creative, collaborative, and qualitative approach to explore the subjective experiences of minoritised ethnic children and young people raised in kinship care by carers who do not share all or any of their ethnic heritage, alongside their recommendations for future policy and practice. The views of care-experienced minoritised ethnic children and young people are consistently underrepresented and underreported in the existing literature (Javed et al., 2025). Where relevant research does exist, it has largely focused on fostering and adoption contexts. This body of work has identified cross-ethnic care placements as a significant area of concern, particularly in relation to children's cultural identity development, sense of belonging, and longer-term mental health and wellbeing (Cane, 2025; Hansen, 2024; Research in Practice, 2023). However, these concerns have not been meaningfully extended to kinship care, which is often assumed to be inherently culturally protective due to children's perceived continued connections to family networks and heritage (Research in Practice, 2023).

In practice, this assumption does not always hold. Kinship families are diverse and may include arrangements in which children and carers do not share the same ethnic or cultural background, including families with more than one ethnic or cultural background, step-kin relationships, and care by family friends. Children and carers in these contexts may encounter complex dynamics related to cultural identity, belonging, and social connections, yet there is currently limited guidance or support available to help families navigate these issues. This lack of evidence and practical guidance leaves services ill-equipped to respond to the needs of both children and carers in cross-ethnic kinship care arrangements.

Importantly, children from minoritised ethnic families are not a homogenous group. While there may be shared experiences associated with kinship care, children's individual experiences are



shaped by a range of factors, including their specific ethnic heritage, family histories, and care arrangements. The creative qualitative approach outlined in this call enables in-depth exploration of the experiences of a particular group of children and young people from minoritised ethnic families who may share similarities in relation to identifying as belonging to mixed or multiple ethnic groups and/or being raised by kinship carers who do not share all of their ethnic heritage. This approach is particularly well-suited to capturing nuance, complexity, and children's own meaning-making around identity and belonging.

Families in Harmony, who will co-lead this research, brings established expertise in working with Afro-Caribbean, Black African, and mixed Black heritage kinship families, and led the decision-making regarding the study's focus population. The decision to focus on children raised by kinship carers who do not share all or any of their ethnic heritage was informed by both sector data and practice-based evidence. Kinship's 2024 annual survey found that 10% of over 1,300 respondents were caring for children identified as belonging to "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups," indicating that this group represents a substantial proportion of kinship families. Additionally, navigating mixed and multiple cultures within kinship families has emerged as a significant challenge for carers. Over the past two years, Families in Harmony has seen a marked increase in requests from White kinship carers seeking support in raising multiple-heritage children. In response, Kinship, the kinship care charity, commissioned Families in Harmony to design and facilitate two six-week training programmes focused on racial identity development and inclusive parenting in kinship care. Both programmes were oversubscribed, highlighting a clear and unmet need for practice development in this area. This need has been further reinforced through the rollout of Families in Harmony's peer support groups outside London, including in Bath and Bristol, where local authority onboarding discussions indicated that mixed-heritage families headed by White kinship carers were caring for the largest group of minoritised ethnic children.

Despite this growing recognition of need among practitioners and carers, children and young people's own perspectives on these experiences remain largely unexplored. Children growing up in kinship care with carers who do not share their ethnicity may experience complex and sometimes conflicting emotions about their heritage, identity, and family relationships, particularly when raised in predominantly White households. As such, this study will focus on children and young people who have one Black African, Caribbean, or Asian birth parent regardless of the ethnicity of their kinship family, as well as children who are Black African, Caribbean, or Asian, or of multiple heritages, and who are being raised by kinship carers who do not share all or any of their ethnic background.

By centring the voices and creative expression of these children and young people, this study seeks to address a critical gap in the evidence base. Hearing directly from children is essential to the development of tailored, culturally responsive support for kinship families with multiple ethnicities. While the study focuses on a specific group, the findings have the potential to inform wider service design and delivery across kinship and non-kinship care contexts, where children from minoritised ethnic groups are frequently placed with carers outside of their ethnicity. The data generated will therefore contribute to more equitable, inclusive, and informed kinship care policy and practice.



# Design and methods

## Design and overall approach

This study adopts a creative and collaborative qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of minoritised ethnic children and young people who are, or have been, raised in kinship care by carers who do not share all or any of their ethnic heritage. The design is grounded in participatory principles and positions children and young people as experts by experience. Creative and arts-based methods are used to support inclusive, meaningful participation, recognising that conventional interview-based approaches may limit how care-experienced children and young people are able or willing to share their experiences (Mannay et al., 2019).

Rather than a one-off or extractive model of data collection, the study involves repeated engagement with participants through group-based creative workshops. Sustained engagement has been shown to support trust-building, reduce power imbalances, and enhance both participation and data quality when researching sensitive topics with care-experienced children and young people (Mannay et al., 2023). This approach also enables participants to shape the direction of the research over time, ensuring that data generation remains responsive to what matters most to them.

The research will be conducted across two sites in England: London and the Bristol and Bath area. These sites were selected due to the research team's established relationships with local authorities, community organisations, and kinship care networks, as well as the demographic diversity of the populations, which supports recruitment of the target sample. The study does not restrict participation to particular local authorities, enabling engagement with children and young people in both formal and informal kinship arrangements and reducing barriers for families with limited statutory involvement.

## Approach to co-production

The project was designed in partnership with people who have direct lived experience of kinship care, and is co-led with a kinship community organisation. No specific coproduction framework is used, instead the National Institute for Health and Care Research INVOLVE standards guide the work (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. UK standards for public involvement<sup>2</sup>**



These standards are operationalised across the research project in three main ways.

### ***Working with peer researchers***

Two researchers with experience of being in kinship care were recruited before the start of the study. They will receive training in creative research methods, ethical research conduct and safeguarding, and analysing qualitative data. They will be involved throughout the research, including in designing the workshops, choosing the methods to be used, conducting consultation sessions with children and young people, analysing data from the workshops, and designing outputs from the study. The overall approach to team working on the project is to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in all elements of the study and can gain skills and experience in the areas that are of most interest to them. The team-working approach is reinforced and operationalised by fortnightly team meetings and regular in-person training sessions, alongside a collective reflective log filled out by team members.

### ***Consultation and co-development with kinship care experienced children and young people***

The study has been designed to be flexible to the needs and preferences of those who take part. This element of coproduction is operationalised through:

- Piloting the potential methods of data collection with peer researchers and a group of kinship care-experienced children and young people

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<sup>2</sup> See: <https://sites.google.com/nih.ac.uk/pi-standards/home>



- Running an introduction session ahead of the first workshop to give participating children and young people a chance to say what they would like to do, and a check in at the end of each workshop to establish preferences for the next session
- Offering a range of activities at each workshop so that children and young people have choice about what they participate in.

### ***Integrated lived and practice experience advisory group feeding into the study***

The study has also built in engagement with a range of people with different experiences and perspectives to shape and feed into key points of the design, delivery and interpretation. The advisory group includes people who have experience of being in kinship care, being kinship carers, working for organisations who support kinship families, and academics who conduct research in the field of kinship care. Some cross more than one of these categories. The advisory group will meet four times across the study, with the timing being flexible based on when they feel they can best input. There will also be opportunities outside of formal meetings to support and feed in, such as supporting with recruitment or hearing about initial findings.

## **Sample and sampling strategy**

The study aims to recruit between 30 and 36 children and young people aged 7 to 25 years. Participants will be organised into six age-banded groups, with three groups at each site: one group of children aged 7–11, one group of young people aged 12–17, and one group of young adults aged 18–25. Each group will consist of approximately five to six participants (see Table 1). Group sizes have been intentionally kept small to facilitate supportive group dynamics, enable relationship-building, and ensure that all participants have opportunities to contribute meaningfully. Age bands have been chosen to reflect common school/educational classifications (i.e. primary ages, secondary ages, further and higher education).

**Table 1. participant sampling approach**

	<b>Site 1 – London</b>	<b>Site 2 – Bristol/Bath</b>
<b>Group 1</b>	5–6 children aged 7–11	5–6 children aged 7–11
<b>Group 2</b>	5–6 young people aged 12–17	5–6 young people aged 12–17
<b>Group 3</b>	5–6 young people aged 18–25	5–6 young people aged 18–25

Participants will be eligible to take part if they have experience of being raised in kinship care before the age of 18, through either formal legal arrangements or informal family care, and meet one of the study’s core ethnic and care-related criteria (see Table 2). These criteria focus on



children and young people of Black African, Caribbean, or Asian heritage who are being raised by kinship carers who do not share all or any of their ethnic background, as well as mixed-heritage children with one Black African, Caribbean, or Asian birth parent. This purposive sampling strategy reflects evidence that children from minoritised ethnic backgrounds are not a homogenous group, and that focused, in-depth qualitative research is required to understand shared and divergent experiences within specific kinship contexts.

Children and young people will be excluded if they fall outside the age range, have not experienced kinship care in childhood, are being raised by kinship carers who share the same ethnic heritage, identify with ethnic backgrounds outside the defined focus of the study, or are unable to attend in-person workshops. However, there will be some flexibility in the last criteria. If there was a young person who really wanted to feed in their views but had social anxiety or a disability that prevented attendance, we would make a provision for them to take part in another way.

**Table 2. Participant inclusion criteria**

	<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>
<b>Ethnicity of children/young people</b>	Minority ethnic in UK including Black African/Caribbean/Asian  Multiple heritage children with only one minority ethnic parent, including Black African/Caribbean/Asian parent	White child with same ethnicity as kinship carer.
<b>Ethnicity of carer</b>	Any, but different to the child they are caring for.	Kinship carer with same ethnicity as child.
<b>Age</b>	7–25	<7 or >25
<b>Care experience</b>	Is in, or has spent time in, kinship care at any point before the age of 18.  (Kinship care through any or no legal order – care order, Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangements Order, private family arrangement, private fostering.)	Has not spent time being raised in kinship care in childhood.
<b>Location</b>	Based in, or able to travel to, Bristol or London for three creative workshops.	Cannot attend three in person events in either Bristol or London (although with flexibility).



## Participant recruitment

Recruitment will be led by Families in Harmony in partnership with CASCADE at Cardiff University, drawing on trusted relationships with local authorities, schools, virtual schools, community and faith organisations, and kinship care networks. These networks will support efforts to reduce structural barriers and build trust with communities who may have experienced marginalisation or mistrust of services and research.

Care-experienced peer researchers will play a central role in recruitment and engagement, enhancing cultural competence, relatability, and trust, particularly among families with challenging experiences of statutory services.

Equality, diversity, inclusion, and equity (EDIE) principles are embedded throughout. Recruitment materials will be co-designed with peer researchers to ensure they are culturally sensitive, accessible, and written in clear language, with additional support provided where needed.

Practical barriers will be addressed by covering travel costs, providing refreshments, using accessible venues, offering flexible participation options, and scheduling activities during school holidays. Participation is voluntary and flexible, with children and young people able to choose how and whether they engage.

The study recognises diversity within minoritised ethnic kinship care communities, with experiences shaped by factors such as age, gender, disability, religion, migration history, socio-economic background, and kinship arrangement.

## Ethics, consent, and safeguarding

Ethical approval will be sought from the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee. Participant information sheets will be developed in age-appropriate formats for children, young people, and carers, clearly outlining the purpose of the study, what participation involves, how data will be used, and participants' rights. Written informed consent will be obtained from carers for participants under 16, alongside age-appropriate assent from the children themselves. Participants aged 16 to 25 will provide their own informed consent.

Safeguarding procedures will follow the [CASCADE Safeguarding Policy](#). A designated Safeguarding Lead will be in place, and clear escalation pathways will be established. Confidentiality and its limits will be explained carefully and revisited throughout the study. Researchers will be attentive to potential distress arising from discussions of identity, family relationships, and care experiences, and appropriate support and signposting will be available. In some cases, kinship carers will be present during the workshops, but this is not mandatory. However, for all children under 16, contact details of the carer will be taken so that they can be contacted if the child is distressed. All participants will be asked to provide emergency contact details in case of any incidents that necessitate an emergency response (i.e. medical issues).



## Accessibility and adaptations

The study has been designed to support participation across a wide range of ages, abilities, and neurodivergent needs. A menu of creative activities will be designed and piloted with peer researchers to give a range of options. In workshops, these will all be available so that participants can choose how they wish to engage, including verbal discussion, drawing, writing, object-based work, or other creative forms. This approach reflects research cautioning against narrow understandings of ‘voice’ and recognises that silence, limited engagement, or non-verbal expression may themselves be meaningful (Chicken et al., 2025).

Activities and materials will be adapted as needed to support accessibility. For example, alternatives will be offered where tactile materials are unsuitable, and tools will be adjusted to support fine motor needs. Researchers will attend closely to verbal and non-verbal cues to ensure participants’ comfort and wellbeing, recognising that children and young people may not always articulate discomfort directly. Adaptations will also be informed by best practice in participatory research with disabled children and young people, which emphasises flexibility, choice, and child-led engagement (Olivant, 2025; Pickering, 2021; Pickering, 2022). Venues will be physically accessible, and advance planning will be undertaken to accommodate specific access requirements.

## Data collection methods

Data will be generated primarily through three in-person creative workshops with each group, resulting in a total of 18 workshops across the study. Workshops will take place during school holidays to maximise accessibility and will be facilitated by members of the research team, care-experienced peer researchers, and, where appropriate, creative practitioners. Each series of workshops will broadly explore everyday experiences of kinship care, challenges and sources of support, and participants’ recommendations for future policy, practice, and research. These areas are intentionally open to allow children and young people to shape the direction of discussion. However, there will be an overall topic guide to shape the discussion, and each creative activity will have a prompt question – i.e. ‘create this to represent who you are and what is important to you’.

Creative activities will act as prompts for reflection and discussion, drawing on methods such as drawing, object work, sandboxing, and poetry. Object-based and sandboxing approaches have been shown to support children and young people in articulating everyday experiences and relationships that may be difficult to express through verbal discussion alone (Watson et al., 2021). Group discussions will be audio-recorded with consent, and researchers will also produce reflective field notes capturing contextual information, group dynamics, and non-verbal aspects of participation.

In addition to the in-person workshops, two remote activities will be facilitated with each group. One will involve a creative ‘keeping in touch’ activity sent by post and discussed through an online or telephone conversation, drawing on lessons from remote creative research with care-experienced young people conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Roberts et al., 2021). The second remote session will focus on member checking, during which emerging findings will be shared with participants in accessible and engaging formats. This process supports participatory analysis and positions children and young people as co-interpreters of data rather than passive subjects (Mannay et al., 2023). We will also provide journals to children and young people at the



first session that they can take away with them to record their everyday reflections through writing and images. They can bring these to the in-person sessions to share with the researchers if they want to.

Where appropriate, the study will also engage local creative practitioners in arts, film, or music-based activities. Engagement with the creative industries is informed by evidence that arts-based approaches can support reflection, identity exploration, and wellbeing among care-experienced children and young people (Nsonwu et al., 2015; Salmon and Rickaby, 2014).

## Analysis

All audio-recorded discussions generated during the creative workshops and remote sessions will be transcribed verbatim. Creative outputs produced by participants will be photographed or scanned with consent and analysed alongside transcripts and researcher field notes. While the qualitative text-based data produced in interviews and group discussions will be the primary data source for analysis, creative outputs will be treated as supplementary data to help with interpretation of findings, rather than analysed as a dataset.

Analysis will take a thematic approach guided by Braun and Clarke's reflective thematic analysis approach (Braun et al., 2023), combining inductive coding grounded in participants' accounts with deductive attention to the study's core areas of interest, including identity, belonging, kinship relationships, and access to support. Initial coding of a subset of transcripts (n=5 per timepoint) will be conducted as a team, working with physically printed copies of the transcripts. These codes will be used to develop a codebook which will be used by the Principal Investigator to code the rest of the data in NVivo. Coded data will then be discussed with the team to develop initial themes, which will then be consolidated themes and subthemes in discussion.

Intersectionality will be used as a guiding analytic framework throughout the analysis. Originating in Black feminist scholarship, intersectionality highlights how multiple, interlocking aspects of identity and social position such as ethnicity, age, gender, care status, disability, and family structure interact to shape lived experience in ways that cannot be understood through single-axis analysis (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991). This framework is particularly relevant to this study, given its focus on children and young people whose experiences of kinship care are shaped at the intersection of racialised identity, family arrangements, and care experience.

Rather than treating demographic characteristics as variables for comparison, intersectionality will be applied reflexively to explore how children and young people describe the co-constitution of their identities and experiences. For example, the analysis will attend to how being of a particular ethnicity or multiple ethnicities intersect with being raised in households or communities that are majority White, how age and developmental stage shape experiences of cultural identity and belonging, and how care status intersects with experiences of recognition, marginalisation, or support within families, schools, and services. This approach avoids homogenising minoritised ethnic children in kinship care as a single group and instead foregrounds both shared patterns and important points of divergence.

In practice, coding will be undertaken in ways that allow themes to be examined across intersecting dimensions. Contextual and demographic information (including age group, ethnicity, kinship



arrangement, and local context) will be used analytically to support interpretation, while avoiding reductive categorisation or deficit framings. Analytic memos will be used throughout to document how intersectional considerations inform theme development and to reflect on how particular narratives may be shaped by multiple, overlapping social positions.

The analytic process will involve multiple members of the research team, including care-experienced peer researchers, to enhance reflexivity and analytic rigour. Collaborative coding and interpretive discussions will provide space to interrogate assumptions, surface alternative readings of the data, and attend to how researchers' own positionalities may shape meaning-making, particularly in relation to race, family, and care. This collaborative approach aligns with established participatory qualitative research practice with care-experienced children and young people (Mannay et al., 2018, 2019).

Emerging themes will be discussed with the advisory group to ensure cultural, contextual, and practice-based nuance is retained. Findings will also be shared with participants through member-checking activities, enabling children and young people to reflect on whether interpretations resonate with their experiences and to identify areas that may require refinement. This process supports analytic credibility and helps guard against over-generalisation or the flattening of diverse experiences.

Findings will be reported in ways that explicitly avoid treating ethnicity, care status, or age as isolated explanatory factors. Instead, the analysis will illustrate how experiences of kinship care are shaped through intersecting identities and social contexts, supporting the development of recommendations that are sensitive to variation in need and experience. By attending to intersectionality throughout the analytic process, the study aims to contribute evidence that supports more equitable, culturally responsive policy and practice without assuming uniformity within minoritised ethnic kinship care experiences.

## **Limitations**

As a qualitative, in-depth study, this research is designed to prioritise depth of understanding over breadth or representativeness. A key limitation of the design is that the findings will not be statistically generalisable to all children and young people in kinship care, or to all minoritised ethnic groups. The study focuses intentionally on a specific subgroup of children and young people, those of Black African, Caribbean, or Asian heritage, or mixed heritage, who are being raised by kinship carers who do not share all or any of their ethnic background. While this focus enables a nuanced exploration of shared and divergent experiences within this under-researched group, it necessarily excludes other minoritised ethnic groups and kinship care arrangements. This limitation is considered acceptable and unavoidable given the study's aims and the need to avoid overly heterogeneous sampling that would dilute analytic depth. The findings are therefore intended to offer transferable insights that may inform wider policy and practice, rather than universal conclusions.

The modest sample size and group-based structure may also limit the range of experiences captured, particularly where individual children or young people's experiences diverge significantly from those of others in their group. However, small group sizes have been deliberately chosen to support trust, emotional safety, and meaningful participation, especially given the sensitive nature



of discussions relating to identity, family relationships, and care experiences. The use of repeated workshops, multiple age bands, and two geographical sites is intended to mitigate this limitation by enabling comparative insight across age and context, while maintaining a supportive environment for participants.

Group-based data collection presents additional limitations, including the possibility that some participants may feel less comfortable sharing sensitive experiences in a group setting, or that dominant voices may shape discussion. This risk is particularly salient when exploring issues related to race, identity, and family dynamics. To mitigate this, the study incorporates a menu of creative activities that allow for non-verbal and individual forms of expression, alongside facilitated discussions designed to encourage inclusive participation. Skilled facilitators and kinship care-experienced peer researchers will support balanced participation, and participants will be reminded that they can choose what they share and how they engage. In addition to group-based activities, individual data generation activities will be offered to all participants so that they can share confidentially. The inclusion of remote activities and individual creative tasks also provides alternative spaces for reflection outside the group context.

There are also potential limitations related to recruitment and retention. Children and young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds in kinship care may face practical and emotional barriers to participation, including caring responsibilities, previous negative experiences with services or research, and concerns about confidentiality. While the study draws on trusted community networks and a by-and-for organisation to support engagement, recruitment of specific age groups or family circumstances may still be uneven. This risk has been mitigated through flexible eligibility criteria regarding formal and informal kinship arrangements, modest group sizes, and the use of multiple recruitment routes. Retention across three workshops may also be challenging; however, co-design of activities, scheduling during school holidays, and maintaining contact through remote 'keeping in touch' activities are intended to support sustained engagement.

From an equality, diversity, inclusion and equity (EDIE) perspective, while the study has been designed to be inclusive and accessible, there remain limitations in reaching all children and young people within the target population. Children with more complex communication needs, significant disabilities, or high levels of emotional distress may still face barriers to participation despite adaptations. The research team will work to accommodate individual needs wherever possible; however, it is recognised that some children and young people may be unable or unwilling to participate in group-based creative research. This limitation is acknowledged, and the study avoids positioning non-participation as disengagement, recognising that opting out is itself a valid expression of agency.

Analytically, the use of creative and arts-based methods introduces interpretive complexity, as meaning is generated through both discussion and creative outputs. There is a risk that researchers' interpretations could overshadow participants' intended meanings. This limitation is mitigated using audio-recorded reflective discussions alongside creative activities, collaborative analysis involving multiple researchers and peer researchers, and participant member-checking to sense-check emerging themes. These strategies support analytic rigour while acknowledging that qualitative interpretation remains situated and reflexive.



Finally, the study is conducted within a specific policy and practice context shaped by the implementation of the National kinship care strategy. While this enhances the relevance and timeliness of the findings, it also means that experiences captured may be influenced by local and temporal factors. This limitation is unavoidable; however, documenting the policy context and participants' reflections on services will support interpretation and future comparison as kinship care policy continues to evolve.

Overall, while the study has several inherent limitations, these are largely a function of its ethical, participatory, and in-depth design. The research team considers these limitations to be appropriate and proportionate given the aims of the study and has incorporated mitigation strategies throughout the design to maximise inclusivity, rigour, and relevance.

## Outputs

The project will generate outputs to maximise impact across policy, practice, community, and academic audiences, ensuring findings are accessible and actionable for children and young people in kinship care, their carers, practitioners, and decision-makers.

The primary output will be a final report for the funder, presenting methods, key findings, and evidence-informed recommendations, with children and young people's perspectives clearly foregrounded and linked to policy and service development, including the National kinship care strategy.

Accessible summary outputs (e.g. executive summaries, practitioner briefings, and evidence digests) will support uptake by non-academic audiences, focusing on practical learning about identity, belonging, wellbeing, and barriers in cross-ethnic kinship care.

Creative, co-produced outputs (e.g. films, animations, and visual materials) will be developed with peer researchers, care-experienced advisors, and creative practitioners to communicate findings in engaging, accessible ways.

Academic outputs will include at least one peer-reviewed article on findings and, where appropriate, a second on methodological learning, to be published after publication of the final report to the funder.

Dissemination will use multiple formats (e.g. reports, briefings, blogs, webinars, podcasts, and presentations) and prioritise accessible, non-stigmatising language that foregrounds strengths while situating experiences within structural contexts. Findings will be shared with local authorities, services, and community organisations to inform practice.

Outputs will also inform teaching and training. EDIE principles underpin all dissemination, ensuring the research is rigorous, culturally responsive, and impactful beyond the study.

## Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (EDIE)

Equality, diversity, inclusion, and equity (EDIE) are foundational to the aims, design, delivery, analysis, and dissemination of this study. The research focuses specifically on the experiences of minoritised ethnic children and young people in kinship care, particularly those navigating cross-



ethnic family arrangements. As such, EDIE is not treated as a peripheral consideration but as a core organising principle shaping all elements of the project, and is embedded throughout the project.

The study has been co-developed in partnership with Families in Harmony, a by-and-for organisation led by individuals with lived experience of kinship care within Black and multiple-heritage communities. This partnership ensures that the research questions, sampling strategy, and engagement approach are grounded in culturally informed knowledge and community priorities. The decision to focus on children and young people who are of Black African, Caribbean, or Asian heritage, or of multiple heritages involving these backgrounds, and who are raised by carers of a different ethnicity, reflects a commitment to addressing racial inequities in the evidence base and responding to identified gaps in research and practice.

The methodological approach – creative, participatory, and collaborative – has been selected in recognition of the structural barriers that minoritised ethnic children and young people may face in traditional research contexts. Creative methods provide multiple routes to expression and reduce reliance on formal verbal articulation, which can privilege particular communication styles or educational backgrounds. This approach aims to create a research environment in which diverse forms of knowledge and expression are legitimised.

## **Ethics and participation**

### **Ethical approval process**

Ethical approval for the study will be sought from the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, which has established procedures for reviewing research involving children, young people, and care-experienced populations. The responsibility for submitting the ethics application will sit with CASCADE, led by the Principal Investigator in collaboration with Families in Harmony. The application will include full details of the study design, recruitment procedures, data collection methods, safeguarding arrangements, and data management plans, alongside all participant-facing materials such as information sheets, consent forms, and recruitment communications.

The ethics application will be submitted at the outset of the project, following confirmation of funding, with approval anticipated within the standard university review timeline. No recruitment or data collection activities will commence until formal ethical approval has been granted. Any amendments to the protocol arising during the project will be submitted for ethical review in line with Cardiff University's procedures.

The study will draw on existing institutional ethical frameworks and safeguarding protocols that have previously received approval for research with care-experienced children and young people. These include established safeguarding and data protection procedures within CASCADE and Cardiff University. The ethical principles underpinning this study are therefore consistent with prior approved judgments regarding research with vulnerable and minoritised populations, while recognising the need for study-specific approval due to the particular focus and methods of this project. An individual project safeguarding plan will be developed and signed by CASCADE and



Families in Harmony, detailing the approach to be taken to address any safeguarding issues that arise. A log of any incidents and actions taken will be kept securely.

### **Agreement to participate and informed consent**

Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary. Clear, age-appropriate information about the study will be provided to all potential participants and, where appropriate, their carers (i.e. for participants under the age of 16 who are not legally allowed to give informed consent). Participant information sheets will explain the purpose of the research, what participation involves, the types of activities to be undertaken, how data will be used, and participants' rights, including the right to decline or withdraw without consequence.

For participants under the age of 16, written informed consent will be obtained from their kinship carer, alongside age-appropriate assent from the child or young person. For participants aged 16 to 25, informed consent will be obtained directly from the young person themselves. Consent will be treated as an ongoing process rather than a one-off event, with researchers regularly checking in with participants to ensure they remain comfortable and willing to take part.

Participants will be reminded that they can choose which activities to engage in, what they share, and how they participate. They may withdraw from the study at any point without providing a reason. Where possible, participants will be able to request that their data is withdrawn up to the point at which analysis is completed, and this will be explained clearly in consent materials.

### **Protecting participants and researchers from harm**

The study involves discussion of potentially sensitive topics, including family relationships, identity, and experiences of care. To minimise the risk of distress, the research design prioritises creative, child-led methods that enable participants to share experiences at their own pace and in ways that feel safe and manageable. Group facilitators will be experienced in working with care-experienced children and young people and will be attentive to signs of discomfort or distress.

Safeguarding procedures will follow the [CASCADE Safeguarding Policy](#), with a designated safeguarding lead responsible for responding to any concerns. Clear processes will be in place for managing disclosures, including when confidentiality may need to be breached to protect a participant or others from harm. These limits to confidentiality will be explained clearly to participants and carers in advance and revisited throughout the study.

Recognising that hearing potentially distressing accounts may also impact researchers and peer researchers, the project includes structured opportunities for reflection and debriefing. Regular supervision, reflective team discussions, and access to additional support will be provided to protect researcher wellbeing and ensure ethical practice is sustained throughout the project.

### **Confidentiality, anonymity, and data security**

All data collected during the study will be treated as confidential. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and identifying information will be removed from transcripts, field notes, and reports. In group-based settings, participants will be encouraged to respect each other's privacy, and clear ground rules regarding confidentiality will be established at the outset of workshops.



While confidentiality within groups cannot be guaranteed, these limitations will be communicated transparently.

Data will be stored securely in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Digital data, including audio recordings and transcripts, will be stored on password-protected Cardiff University servers, with access restricted to named members of the research team. Physical materials such as consent forms or creative outputs not retained by participants will be photographed with password-protected tablets and transferred to the university servers. Physical copies will be securely destroyed at the University. Data shared will not be shared beyond Cardiff University.

## **Ethical governance and ongoing review**

Ethical considerations will be reviewed continuously throughout the project. The research team will adopt a reflexive approach to ethics, recognising that ethical issues may arise during data collection and analysis that require careful judgement and responsiveness. Any significant ethical concerns or adverse events will be documented and, where necessary, reported to the ethics committee in line with institutional requirements.

By embedding ethical principles throughout the design, delivery, and governance of the study, the project seeks to ensure that participation is safe, respectful, and empowering for children and young people, while also safeguarding the wellbeing of researchers and maintaining the integrity of the research process.

## **Registration**

The protocol will be published on the Open Science Framework website.

## **Data protection**

This research project will adhere fully to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as implemented in UK law. Cardiff University is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller and is committed to processing personal data lawfully, fairly, transparently, and with respect for data subjects' rights. The University's Data Protection Policy<sup>3</sup> outlines the obligations and duties of the University and its staff in fulfilling data protection requirements, including compliance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and ensuring transparency in how personal information is handled.

The research team at Cardiff University (the Data Controller) will comply with institutional policies, including the Data Protection Policy, Records Management Policy,<sup>4</sup> and Information

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection>

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/record-management-policy-and-retention-schedules>



Security Policy<sup>5</sup>, ensuring that personal data is managed securely and ethically throughout the project.

Participants will be provided with a Data Protection Notice that explains how their personal data will be handled, processed, stored, and protected, drawing on the University's research participants data protection guidance.

## **Data quality, confidentiality, and anonymity**

To ensure high data quality and protect confidentiality:

- Personal data (e.g. names and contact details) will be collected only as needed for recruitment, consent, and communication
- Participants will be assigned unique identifiers, and pseudonyms will be used in transcripts, field notes, and all outputs
- Data accuracy will be supported through careful transcription checks and verification procedures
- Identifying details will be removed or minimised wherever possible, and participants will be informed about confidentiality limits, particularly in group workshop settings
- Cardiff University's Records Management Policy specifies retention schedules and secure disposal procedures, ensuring data are retained no longer than necessary and destroyed in a secure manner when appropriate. All digital data will be stored on secure, password-protected Cardiff University servers, with access restricted to named members of the research team. Physical documents (e.g. signed consent forms) will be digitised and stored securely online and physical copies will be securely destroyed. Any personal data (i.e. consent forms, demographic information, etc.) will be stored separately to data generated for the research, in a password protected folder.

## **Legal basis for processing personal data (Article 6)**

Under Article 6 of the UK GDPR, the legal basis for processing personal data in this research is Article 6(1)(e): performance of a task carried out in the public interest. The research is being conducted by a public institution and seeks to generate evidence that will contribute to improving understanding and provision in kinship care and inform policy and practice development. This basis is consistent with Cardiff University's Data Protection Policy, which confirms that the University is a Data Controller responsible for processing personal data in compliance with current legislation and the rights of data subjects.

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants (and/or their carers where appropriate) as an ethical requirement and to ensure transparency; however, consent is not relied on as the sole legal basis under Article 6. Treating public-interest processing as the legal basis avoids overreliance on consent as a legal mechanism, while still respecting individuals' autonomy through ethical consent processes.

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<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/information-security>



## **Processing of special category personal data (Article 9)**

This study will involve the processing of special category personal data as defined in UK GDPR Article 9, including information relating to:

- Racial or ethnic origin
- Health, disability, or communication needs (when disclosed by participants)
- Experiences of care and family, which may reveal sensitive personal circumstances.

The legal basis for processing special category data will be Article 9(2)(j): processing necessary for scientific research purposes, supported by Schedule 1, Part 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018. This basis permits processing sensitive data where appropriate safeguards are in place, and the research contributes to scientific knowledge in a manner that respects data subjects' rights. The processing of special category data is necessary for understanding how ethnicity, identity, and care experience intersect, which is central to the research aims.

To bolster participant understanding and transparency, explicit consent will be obtained for participation and for the processing of personal and special category data as part of the ethical consent process, even though consent is not the primary legal basis for lawful processing under data protection law.

## **Rationale for legal bases and organisational alignment**

The selection of Article 6(1)(e) (public interest) and Article 9(2)(j) (scientific research) as legal bases reflects both the public-benefit nature of the project and Cardiff University's status as a public research institution with established data protection governance frameworks. The University's Data Protection Policy confirms its responsibilities as Data Controller, including adhering to data protection principles, respecting data subject rights, and processing personal data lawfully and transparently.

These legal bases ensure that:

- Data processing is lawful, proportionate, and justified by the research purposes
- Participants' rights are upheld through transparent information and ethical consent procedures
- Sensitive data essential to meeting the research objectives can be processed with appropriate safeguards.

## **Participant rights and data subject access**

Participants retain the rights afforded by UK GDPR, including the right to access personal data held about them (via a Subject Access Request), the right to request correction of inaccurate data, and the rights to restrict or object to processing where applicable. These rights are outlined in the University's [data protection rights information document](#) and will be communicated to participants through the Data Protection Notice provided at recruitment.



## Risks and mitigations

Anticipated risk category	Owner of risk	Impact of risk (1-5)	Anticipated impact	Likelihood of risk (1-5)	Proposed mitigating actions
<b>Recruitment challenges</b>	Sharon McPherson, Lorna Stabler	3	<p>If we are unable to recruit the target number of participants, we will still have findings that can answer our research questions.</p> <p>If we are unable to recruit participants in the correct age groups, we will be limited in what we can conclude about how experiences vary across childhood/ early adulthood</p>	2	<p>We will use multiple recruitment routes simultaneously, included established local authority, school, faith, and community networks, as well as targeted social media outreach.</p> <p>Peer researchers with lived experience will play an active role in reaching potential participants and advising on culturally appropriate engagement.</p> <p>We have intentionally set modest group sizes (5–6 participants) to make targets achievable.</p>
<p><b>Participant retention across three sessions.</b></p> <p><b>Young people may face challenging circumstances or competing commitments.</b></p>	Lorna Stabler, Sharon McPherson	2	<p>If participants cannot attend all sessions, then we might be limited in the data we collect from those with lower attendance.</p> <p>However, all sessions will contribute to the final analysis, so full participation will not impact on whether the data is useful.</p>	3	<p>Activities will be co-designed with participants to ensure interest and relevance, scheduled at convenient times (including school holidays) and held in accessible locations.</p> <p>We will provide reminders, cover travel costs, and ensure a welcoming, safe environment to encourage continued engagement.</p> <p>We will also deliver some ‘keep in touch’ activities between the workshops to maintain engagement.</p>



Anticipated risk category	Owner of risk	Impact of risk (1-5)	Anticipated impact	Likelihood of risk (1-5)	Proposed mitigating actions
<p><b>Potential distress or safeguarding issues.</b></p> <p><b>Discussions about kinship care and identity may be emotionally challenging for participants.</b></p>	Lorna Stabler	2	<p>Difficult topics arising is a normal part of this type of research and indeed might be part of what young people think it is important to discuss. In addition, having space to talk openly may give an opportunity to raise safeguarding issues or worried that they have.</p> <p>This would not significantly negatively impact on the delivery of the project as it would be an anticipated element to the work, with protocols in place.</p> <p>It is possible however that if there is a distressing incident, data collection may need to be postponed. However, we have flexibility to do follow up interviews at a different time where necessary.</p>	2	<p>The project will follow robust safeguarding procedures, with trained facilitators and a designated Safeguarding Lead.</p> <p>Participants will be fully informed about confidentiality and its limits.</p> <p>Support signposting will be available, and activities will be structured to allow positive closure after sensitive discussions.</p>
<p><b>Delays in ethical approval or local authority permissions</b></p>	Lorna Stabler	2	<p>This could impact the project timeline.</p>	2	<p>Ethical approval will be sought promptly at project inception, using established processes at Cardiff University. Early engagement with local authority contacts will secure required permissions in parallel.</p>



Anticipated risk category	Owner of risk	Impact of risk (1-5)	Anticipated impact	Likelihood of risk (1-5)	Proposed mitigating actions
<p><b>Staff capacity risks.</b></p> <p><b>Illness or unforeseen commitments.; the team members have multiple competing priorities.</b></p>	<p>Lorna Stabler, Sharon McPherson</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>The project team is relatively small, which could mean that competing priorities impact on the delivery of the work.</p> <p>However, the majority of data collection has been scheduled at quiet times for the team, and everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities and are fully committed to the project.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>The project is co-led by two experienced organisations, ensuring cross-coverage of roles, with a clear delivery plan and regular progress monitoring. Mannay and Stabler are both very experienced with managing multiple projects and supporting teams to conduct research. FIIH have worked to develop their full cost recovery model and capacity to be able to engage with research projects while also delivering their own intervention. This has been a subject of discussion in the team and costs/planned for accordingly.</p>



# Project management

## Personnel

### **Dr Lorna Stabler**

Dr Lorna Stabler is the Principal Investigator of the study. She is a Research Fellow within the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) at Cardiff University and serves as Specialty Lead for Social Care and Residential Care at Health and Care Research Wales, and Senior Fellow for Kinship Care at Foundations.

Lorna's research has focused on strengthening protective relationships for children who have experienced maltreatment, with an emphasis in the last seven years on the importance of involving wider family networks in social work intervention. She leads a Nuffield Foundation-funded project exploring Special Guardianship Orders in Wales, using linked social care, health, and education data, combined with child neurodevelopment assessments to understand the strengths and needs of SGO families. Her PhD thesis investigated sibling kinship care, using mixed qualitative methods including narrative interviews, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. She has also conducted research using qualitative methods to explore the experiences of children and young people in and leaving care.

Lorna is also a leading advocate for co-production in children's social care research, with a focus on deep involvement of individuals with lived social care experience in design and implementation – a perspective she shared in a keynote at the ISPCAN social work conference in Sweden in 2024. She is deeply committed with working in partnership with people with lived experience throughout the research process.

### ***Responsibilities:***

Lorna will take the lead on ethical approval, the overall study design, and support training and developing the peer researchers. She will convene and chair the advisory group meetings. She will organise and attend all in-person data collection workshops. Lorna will take the lead in developing the data analysis approach and leading data analysis. She will be responsible for data governance, safeguarding, and reporting.

### **Sharon McPherson**

Sharon McPherson is co-lead of the study. She is a kinship carer, mother, grandmother, and Co-Founder of Families in Harmony, the UK's leading lived-experience-led organisation championing racial equity in kinship care. As a grandmother raising two of her grandsons, Sharon brings authenticity and cultural insight to her leadership, ensuring that African, Caribbean, and Black Mixed Heritage families are fully represented in policy and practice.

With a background in senior management and community development, Sharon has extensive experience in translating government policy into meaningful grassroots impact. In 2023 she was awarded a Churchill Fellowship, which enabled her to conduct pioneering research in Jamaica. Her



project explored the legacy of Windrush-era 'barrel children' and its connection to the challenges faced by Black kinship carers in the UK today, using narrative research to surface culturally informed solutions.

Sharon is also Co-Chair of the Kinship Care Alliance's race equalities subgroup, where she contributed to the Department for Education's Stable Homes, Built on Love implementation strategy, embedding culturally responsive and trauma-aware practice across the sector.

A confident public advocate, Sharon is part of the Sounddelivery Media spokesperson network, with commentary featured on BBC Radio 5 Live and in publications such as Children & Young People Now. In 2025, Families in Harmony was named one of The Big Issue's Changemakers, recognising Sharon's national influence.

### ***Responsibilities:***

Sharon will take the lead on advising on EDIE plans for the study, community engagement and recruitment across both sites, and supporting the two peer researchers on the study. She will attend fortnightly team meetings, advisory group meetings, peer researcher training, and in-person data collection workshops. Sharon will also support with interpretation of data analysis.

### **Kyle Rogers**

Kyle is the Youth Engagement Worker at Families in Harmony and is a peer researcher on this project. He was raised in kinship care. In his work, he aims to bring the voice of the youth to the fore. Kyle feels he can personally relate to children in kinship care, understanding their stories and journeys, while promoting positivity and uniqueness around the story of being a kinship child.

He is also a keen footballer, gamer, and does a bit of cooking.

### ***Responsibilities:***

Kyle will contribute to all stages of the research project, including recruiting young people, helping to design the workshops, carrying out interviews, supporting data analysis, and attending the advisory group.

### **Reece Lee**

Reece is a peer researcher and volunteer with Families in Harmony, working with younger children. He shares a similar experience to many of the children, and draws on this to try and support others because he knows what they are going through. Reece is a bit of a football addict, and enjoys other sports. He's not bad in the kitchen either.

### ***Responsibilities:***

Reece will contribute to all stages of the research project, including recruiting young people, helping to design the workshops, carrying out interviews, supporting data analysis, and attending the advisory group.



## **Professor Dawn Mannay**

Dawn Mannay is a Professor of Creative Research Methodologies at Cardiff University, with expertise in qualitative and creative research methodologies. Her interdisciplinary research spans sociology, education, and psychology, with a strong focus on participatory approaches that elevate the voices of underrepresented communities. A central feature of Dawn's work is her innovative use of visual, creative, and arts-based methods, including drawing, photography, collage, and sandboxing. She has been particularly influential in promoting methods that engage participants as co-producers of knowledge, often working alongside peer researchers and advisors who are experts by experience. Dawn has made a significant contribution to research involving care-experienced children and young people, exploring themes such as identity, belonging, education, and transitions from care.

Her participatory ethos ensures that research not only captures the complexity of lived experiences but also seeks to inform policy and practice in meaningful ways. Dawn has led and collaborated on numerous projects in partnership with local authorities, third-sector organisations, and care-experienced communities, ensuring that the knowledge generated is both impactful and grounded in real-world concerns. Dawn has authored and edited a number of books, which are widely used by scholars and practitioners interested in qualitative inquiry and creative research practice including *Visual, narrative and creative research methods: Application, reflection and ethics*; *The SAGE Handbook of visual research methods*; *Creative research methods in education: Principles and practices*; *The Handbook of creative data analysis*; and *Sandboxing in Practice: Qualitative interviewing with sand, objects and figures*. Dawn has also published widely on her work with care experienced children and young people. She co-edited the book *Children and young people 'looked after'? Education, intervention and the everyday culture of care in Wales*, and the impact of her work has been recognised with a 4\* REF Impact Study and awards from Wales Social Research Association, the Learned Society of Wales, and Cardiff University's Celebrating Excellence Award for Civic Mission.

### ***Responsibilities:***

Dawn will take the lead on developing the creative methods for the study, and on training the rest of the research team on the appropriate methods for the study. She will attend advisory group meetings, peer researcher training, and in-person data collection workshops. Dawn will also support with data analysis and interpretation of the findings.

## **Grace Parry**

Grace is a Cardiff University psychology undergraduate placement student at CASCADE who will be supporting the research.

In addition to the named researchers, the consortium will have the support of colleagues across CASCADE and Cardiff University, Families In Harmony and their linked organisations, and other third sector organisations and kinship care academics through consultation and the advisory group. Administrative support will be provided by CASCADE to ensure smooth coordination of meetings, workshops, and reporting.



## Timeline

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ Leading
<b>January 2026</b>	<b>Project start</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement of project aims and outcomes</li> <li>• Kick-off meeting attended</li> <li>• Progress meetings scheduled</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler
<b>February 2026</b>	<b>Set-up documents drafted</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler
<b>February 2026</b>	<b>Ethics and governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit ethics application</li> <li>• Ethical approval granted</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler
<b>February 2026 – March 2026</b>	<b>Research protocol</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Protocol draft shared with Foundations for comment</li> <li>• Protocol published</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler
<b>February 2026 – April 2026</b>	<b>Peer researcher training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to research</li> <li>• Creative methods training</li> <li>• Planning and running a research project</li> <li>• Ethics and safeguarding</li> <li>• Data analysis</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler, Dawn Mannay
<b>February set up; March, June, October and December meetings</b>	<b>Advisory group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership finalised</li> <li>• Advisory group meetings held</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler
<b>March 2026 – May 2026</b>	<b>Recruitment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment routes for kinship families confirmed</li> <li>• Recruitment begins</li> <li>• 100% recruitment target met</li> </ul>	Sharon McPherson



Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ Leading
<b>May 2026</b>	<b>Finalising materials and workshop design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation workshops with kinship care experienced young people</li> <li>• Online introduction session with participants.</li> <li>• Workshop materials refined and safeguarding tested.</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler, Dawn Mannay
<b>Workshops in May 2026, August 2026, October 2026</b>	<b>Data collection workshops</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First in person workshops</li> <li>• Keeping in touch session</li> <li>• Second in person workshop</li> <li>• Keeping in touch session</li> <li>• Third in person workshop</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler
<b>May 2026 – October 2026</b>	<b>Data preparation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data entry of demographic data</li> <li>• Rolling transcription and preliminary coding during data collection</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler
<b>June 2026 – December 2026</b>	<b>Data analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transcribe and code all creative outputs</li> <li>• Complete full data analysis and synthesis</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler, Dawn Mannay
<b>December 2026</b>	<b>Data interpretation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member checking session with participants</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler, Kyle Rogers and Reece Lee
<b>January 2027 – February 2027</b>	<b>Reporting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> <li>• Share findings with Advisory Group.</li> <li>• Finalise report for publication</li> <li>• Submit project completion form</li> <li>• End of project financial report submitted</li> <li>• Dissemination workshops with stakeholders completed</li> <li>• Hold final meeting with funder</li> </ul>	Lorna Stabler



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Assent form for Children

### Kinship care, community and culture project

#### Assent form

Child/Young Person (or if unable, parent/researcher on their behalf) to circle all they agree with:

- Has somebody else explained this project to you? Yes/No
- Do you understand what this project is about? Yes/No
- Have you asked all the questions you want? Yes/No
- Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand? Yes/No
- Do you understand it's OK to stop taking part at any time? Yes/No
- Are you happy to take part? Yes/No
- Are you happy for your voice to be recorded? Yes/No
- Are you happy to have photographs of any of your artwork to be taken? Yes/No
- Do you understand what will happen with what you tell us? Yes/No

**If any answers are “no” or you don’t want to take part, that’s OK! No one will be cross with you.**

If you do want to take part, please write your name below

Your name

Date

The researcher who explained this project to you needs to sign too:

Print Name

Sign

Date



**Remember you do not have to take part in all of the things, and you can change your mind afterwards. Thank you!**



## Appendix B: Consent form from carers

### Kinship care, community and culture project

#### Consent form

Carer to circle all they agree with:

- Has somebody explained this project to you? Yes/No
- Do you understand what this project is about? Yes/No
- Have you asked all the questions you want? Yes/No
- Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand? Yes/No
- Do you understand your child can stop taking part at any time? Yes/No
- Are you happy for your child to take art if they want to? Yes/No
- Are you happy for your child's voice to be recorded if they want it to be? Yes/No
- Are you happy for photographs of your child's artwork to be taken if they agree to this? Yes/No
- Do you understand what will happen with the data that is produced (see data notice)? Yes/No

If you **do** want your child to take part, please write your name below

Your name

Your child's name

Date

The researcher who explained this project to you needs to sign too:

Print Name

Sign

Date



## Appendix C: Consent form for young people (16+)

### Kinship care, community and culture project

#### Consent form

Young Person to circle all they agree with:

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| • Has somebody else explained this project to you?                      | Yes/No |
| • Do you understand what this project is about?                         | Yes/No |
| • Have you asked all the questions you want?                            | Yes/No |
| • Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?         | Yes/No |
| • Do you understand it's OK to stop taking part at any time?            | Yes/No |
| • Are you happy to take part?   | Yes/No |
| • Are you happy for your voice to be recorded?                          | Yes/No |
| • Are you happy to have photographs of any of your artwork to be taken? | Yes/No |
| • Do you understand what will happen with what you tell us?             | Yes/No |

**If any answers are “no” or you don't want to take part, that's OK! No one will be cross with you.**

If you **do** want to take part, please write your name below

Your name

Date



The researcher who explained this project to you needs to sign too:

Print Name

Sign

Date

**Remember you do not have to take part in all of the things, and you can change your mind afterwards. Thank you!**



## Appendix D: Information sheet for carers

### **Kinship care, community and culture project**

#### **Who are we?**

We are a research partnership between Cardiff University and Families in Harmony. Lorna Stabler and Dawn Mannay are researchers from Cardiff University. Sharon McPherson, Kyle and Reece are researchers from Families in Harmony. We bring a combination of academic and lived experience to the research team – some of us have been kinship carers or have been in kinship care. The project is funded by Foundations – What Works for Children & Families.

#### **What is the project about?**

Some children and young people are cared for by family members, like grandparents, aunties, uncles, older siblings, or close friends of the family. This is often called kinship care. This includes children who have more than one culture or heritage, or who are growing up in families with a different culture or ethnicity to their own - for example, a child might have parents who are from different ethnicities, but be brought up by grandparents from one side of their family, or live with a family friend who does not have the same cultural background as them.

We want to learn more about what life is like for children and young people in kinship care and what is important to them. Even though lots of children live with a kinship carer, children who have a different race, culture or ethnicity to their kinship family have not been asked before about their lives as part of a research project. Carers have raised this as an area they need more support with. We think that children and young people can tell us important things that other people should know and listen to.

#### **Why are we asking your child to take part?**

We think it is very important to hear from children and young people. We are telling you about this project because you are a kinship carer who may be caring for a child who is eligible to take part. To participate, a child / young person should be aged 7 – 25, be in kinship care or have spent time in kinship care, and have experience of being raised by kinship carers who do not share all of their ethnic or cultural background. You will also need to be able to attend 3 in person workshops in either Bristol or London. These will be in the school holidays (Spring, Summer and Autumn).

#### **What will we do**

We will have three workshops held in places that have lots of things to be creative with, like making music, drawing or building things. We will also have two workshops online which you can join from home. Children don't need to come to everything, they can choose which bits they want to participate in. Even if they do come to a workshops, they don't need to talk to the researchers in a one-to-one interview. Local travel expenses will be covered and snacks / equipment will be provided.



## **These are some of the areas we might ask your child about:**

- What makes you 'you'.
- What should other people – like teachers, doctors, other children - know about kinship care.
- What do you most enjoy doing with your family.

We will also do lots of activities and they can choose what they want to talk about – or not to say anything at all. If they do choose to talk with us, we would audio record the interviews, or make notes about what they say, and take photos of artwork that they make (with their permission).

All recordings will be kept secure and will not be shared with anyone else involved in the project. We will write up some of the things that are shared with us by children and young people in a report or other writing, and we might make documents and videos to share important messages, but we won't use their name.

## **Consent and assent**

We ask for consent for all children aged 16. For children under 16, we will ask for their carer to consent to their child taking part. We will also ask the child if they would like to take part and also go through a process of checking that they understand and want to participate (assent). If a child at any point says that they do not want to take part, or there are parts of the research that they don't want to do, then this will be respected

If a child does take part and then changes their mind later, they can contact the research team ([stablerl@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:stablerl@cardiff.ac.uk)) and ask for us not to include anything they said or any of their artwork up until 31 January 2027.

## **What happens to the information (data) we collect?**

Everything will be kept private and safe at Cardiff University on secure computer systems. Data will be anonymised.

## **What happens to the data at the end of the research project?**

The information that we record will be kept safe for 5 years after the project ends. It will then be deleted. But what we write from what we are told might be available forever – but no names or identifying information will be included.

## **Next steps...**

Please contact us if you would like to ask any questions, or if you think your child would like to take part. You can express an interest by filling out this short form: [Link to form provided]

**Thank you for reading this 😊**

## **Questions**

You can ask Lorna any questions: Lorna Stabler [StablerL@Cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:StablerL@Cardiff.ac.uk)



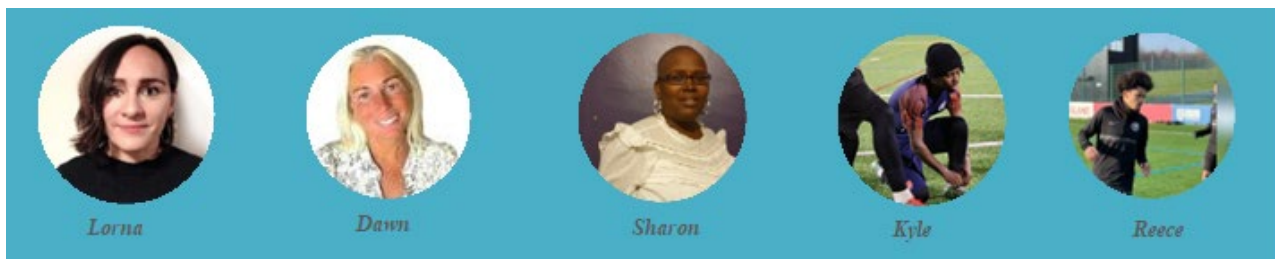
If you have any concerns about the research and want to talk to someone Independent, you can contact: [socsi-ethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:socsi-ethics@cardiff.ac.uk)



# Appendix E: Information sheet for children

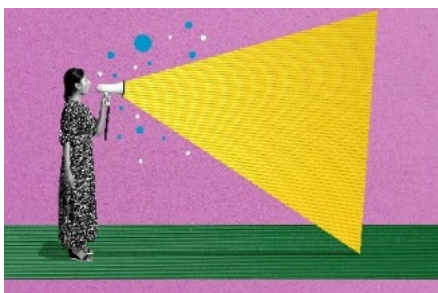
## Kinship care, community and culture project

### Who are we?



Lorna and Dawn are researchers from Cardiff University. Sharon, Kyle and Reece are researchers from Families in Harmony. Some of us also have spent time in kinship care or are kinship carers.

### What is the project about?



Some children and young people are cared for by family members, like grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, or close friends of the family. This is often called kinship care. This includes children who have more than one culture or heritage, or who are growing up in families with a different culture or ethnicity to their own - for example, a child might have parents who are from different ethnicities, but be brought up by grandparents from one side of their family, or live with a

family friend who does not have the same cultural background as them.

We want to learn more about what life is like for children and young people in kinship care and what is important to them. Even though lots of children live with a kinship carer, children who have a different race, culture or ethnicity to their kinship family have not been asked before about their lives as part of a research project. We think that children and young people can tell us important things that other people should know and listen to.

### Why have we asked you to take part?



We think it is very important to hear from children and young people. You have been invited to take part because your carer thinks you have important things to say, and that you would enjoy taking part.

As part of the research, you can choose to do different things such as arts and crafts or just talk to us. You will be able to take part as much or as little as you would like. You can keep any art you make.



## What will we do

We will have three workshops in buildings in your local area in the school holidays. These are places that have lots of things to be creative with, like making music, drawing or building things. We will also have two workshops online which you can join from home. Your carer will be there too. You don't need to come to everything. Even if you do come, you don't need to talk to us, you can still take part in the activities.

## These are some of the areas we might ask you about:

- What makes you 'you'.
- What should other people – like teachers, doctors, other children - know about kinship care.
- What do you most enjoy doing with your family.

We will also do lots of activities and you can choose what you want to talk about – or not to say anything at all. If you do choose to talk with us, we would like to record your voices talking, or make notes about what you say, and take photos of your artwork. All recordings will be kept secure and will not be shared with anyone else involved in the project. We will write up some of the things you say in a report or other writing, and we might make documents and videos to share important messages, but we won't use your name.

**You don't have to take part at all, or you can choose which bits you would like to do. Even if you take part, you can change your mind later and ask for us not to include anything you said or any of your artwork up until 31 January 2027.**



## What happens to the information (data) we collect?

Everything will be kept private and safe at Cardiff University.

## What happens to the data at the end of the research project?

The information that we record will be kept safe for 5 years after the project ends. It will then be deleted. But what we write from what you tell us might be available forever – but no one will know you were the one that took part.

## Next steps...

**Please contact us if you would like to ask any questions. You need to sign an assent form if you would like to take part which we can do together.**

**Thank you for reading this 😊**

You can ask Lorna any questions: Lorna Stabler ([StablerL@Cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:StablerL@Cardiff.ac.uk))





## Appendix F: Carers recruitment poster

### Research with children and young people in kinship care

Some kinship carers are raising children and young people who have more than one culture or heritage, or have a different culture or ethnicity to their own - for example, a child might have parents who are from different ethnicities, but be brought up by grandparents from one side of their family, or live with a family friend who does not have the same cultural background as them.

Sounds like your family? We'd love to invite your children to take part in three creative workshops during the school holidays and help us to learn more about what matters to them and how you can best support them!

#### Who can take part:

- Children and young people aged [7-25];
- Who live/ have lived in kinship care;
- Are part of a family with more than one ethnicity or cultural background;
- Who can to come to three workshops in Bristol or London.

[Local travel expenses for carers and young people covered, and all materials]

#### What will they do?

In the workshops we will offer some creative group activities with similar aged children and young people. There will be the opportunity for children and young people to take part in an optional one to one interview with the research team.

#### Who are we?

This project is led by researchers from:

- Families in Harmony [charity]
- CASCADE, Cardiff University

Our team includes Lorna [lead researcher], Sharon, Kyle, Reece, Dawn, and Grace.

- We are working together to learn more about the experiences of children and young people in kinship care.

If you're interested, have any questions, or you'd like to know more, let us know by filling out [this short form](#)

 **Families in Harmony**



## Appendix G: Young people recruitment poster



### What matters to you? We'd love to hear from you.

Some children and young people are cared for by family members or close family friends - like grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, godparents or their friends' parents. This also includes young people who have more than one culture or heritage, or who are growing up in families with a different cultural background to their own.

Does this sound like you? We are inviting children, teenagers, and young adults (aged up to 25) to take part in a series of creative workshops during the school holidays. We want to understand what matters to you, and what your everyday life is like.

### Who can take part?

You can join if:

- You are 25 or under;
- you live/ have lived with a family member or family friend who isn't your parent;
- your family includes more than one ethnicity or cultural background.
- You can attend three workshops in [Bristol](#) or [London](#).

[Travel costs will be covered for you and if you bring someone with you]

### What will happen in the workshops?

The workshops will include a range of creative activities, with options suitable for different age groups. You can choose how you take part.

There will also be opportunities to talk privately with researchers about your experiences, daily life, and what matters most to you.

### Who are we?

This project is led by researchers from:

- Families in Harmony (charity)
- CASCADE, Cardiff University.

Our team includes Lorna [lead researcher], Sharon, Kyle, Reece, Dawn, and Grace.

We are working together to learn more about the experiences of children and young people in kinship care [when you are cared for by a relative or family friend].



If you're interested, have any questions, or you'd like to know more, let us know by filling out [this short form](#)



