



**Kinship Carers and Employment:
Barriers and Opportunities**
Final Report

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SCOTINFORM

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Preface

Kinship carers take on the care of the children of a family member or close friend when the parent(s) for whatever reason is no longer able to do so. In taking on this responsibility, they are endeavouring to ensure a better future for the child by keeping them with their family, and in doing so, are creating considerable savings for the state. And yet, one of the unintended consequences for many kinship carers is that they are plunged into poverty.

One of the reasons for this is that many kinship carers are unable to continue with their employment. The intention of this report is to explore through dialogue with kinship carers the reasons for this, and to see if there are measures which employers and others can take to ensure that kinship carers remain in employment. As well as avoiding financial hardship for kinship carers, this could have the added benefit of employee retention for employers.

The report details the reasons many kinship carers have to leave their employment. The main reasons are:

- Finding suitable childcare provision
- Lack of flexible working provision
- The need to take time off for appointments
- Stress

While there is a specific entitlement for children in kinship care to childcare, this is for pre-school early learning and childcare. Kinship carers' difficulties in accessing childcare may result from a variety of factors: it could be that they are unaware of the entitlement and that better signposting and knowledge of the provision is needed, or that they feel that given the attachment issues of the child a childcare place is not the most suitable option for their child. Given the age of the children cared for in this study, it is likely that at least some of the issue is finding out of school childcare. This currently sits outside of statutory entitlement, and many families, both kinship carers and others, have difficulty in finding out of school childcare; this is something which urgently needs to be addressed for the benefit of kinship carers and other parents.

A key issue is that many kinship carers do not disclose their status to employers because of the associated stigma. Obviously, this makes it impossible for employers to help if they are unaware that the employee is a kinship carer. One of the recommendations we make in our briefing ([http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/media/825937/pasbriefingapril2016\[2\].pdf](http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/media/825937/pasbriefingapril2016[2].pdf)) is that employers should specifically mention kinship carers within their policies and alert them to the fact that they may have entitlements to adjustments to enable them to continue in employment.

We hope that the publication of this report will inform employers and others about the difficulties that kinship carers face in continuing in employment and show some ways in which these might be overcome. Moreover, we hope that employers and others will be able to take the requisite measures to allow kinship carers to stay in employment, and give their children the best start in life.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) commissioned Scotinform to conduct research with kinship carers to explore the barriers that carers faced in maintaining and returning to the labour market. The definition of kinship care for the purposes of this study was: people who are caring informally or formally for a child/children of a family member/close family friend on a full-time basis. Appendix One gives further details of the main categories of kinship care.

The work was managed by a steering group who provided guidance and expertise in developing the research tools and ensured that a range of relevant sectors could input to the research. The steering group was chaired by PAS and consisted of representatives from Citizens Advice Scotland; Family Friendly Working Scotland; Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG); Children 1st; Kinship Care Midlothian; Mentor UK; Carers Scotland; One Parent Families Scotland; and Scotinform Ltd

The objectives of the research were to:

- find out how kinship care arrangements affect carers' ability to stay in or return to work
- highlight specific barriers and examples of good and bad practice among employers
- provide recommendations/practice guidelines so that kinship carers who want to work are given the flexibility and support to do so

1.2 Research Approach

The research was conducted in two stages:

1.2.1 Stage One: Consultations with kinship carers and literature review

Following the first meeting of the steering group, consultations were conducted by Scotinform in three local authority areas: Dundee, Inverclyde, and Midlothian. In Dundee and Midlothian the consultations were with groups of kinship carers at their regular meetings with their Development Officers/Support Worker. In Inverclyde, as there was no meeting scheduled during the study period, the consultations were carried out at the kinship carers' homes accompanied by the Kinship Care Social Worker. In total, 33 kinship carers participated in the consultations: the numbers involved in each area are shown in the table below:

Local authority area		Number of carers participating
Dundee	One group	8
Inverclyde	Face to face interviews	4
Midlothian	Two groups	21

The discussions were facilitated by Janet Sylvester of Scotinform, using a topic guide agreed with the steering group (see Appendix Two).

The topline report on the findings was discussed at the meeting of the steering group on 23 October 2015.

1.2.2 Stage Two: Survey of kinship carers

The aim of Stage Two was to quantify and explore further the key issues identified in Stage One through a survey of kinship carers. The survey was conducted through a self-completion survey of kinship carers across Scotland using two methods to distribute the questionnaire (see copy of questionnaire in Appendix Three):

- paper questionnaires were mailed by Children 1st and Mentor UK to their databases of contacts. The questionnaire included a freepost address for return.
- the link to an online questionnaire was distributed by the steering group members through social media and websites

The questionnaire was sent out on 25 November and closed on 11 December. A total of 105 completed questionnaires were received during this period: 62 paper questionnaires and 43 online.

Table 1.1 shows the responses by local authority area, with responses received from 26 of the 32 local authority areas¹.

Table 1.1: Breakdown of responses by local authority area

	Number of returned questionnaires
Aberdeen	3
Aberdeenshire	8
Angus	3
Argyll and Bute	1
Dumfries and Galloway	4
Dundee	2
East Ayrshire	1
East Dunbartonshire	1
East Lothian	9
Edinburgh	17
Falkirk	1

¹ No responses received from kinship carers in Clackmannanshire, East Renfrewshire, Moray, Na h-Eileanan Siar, Renfrewshire or Scottish Borders

Fife	15
Glasgow	7
Highland	3
Inverclyde	1
Midlothian	2
North Ayrshire	8
North Lanarkshire	3
Orkney	1
Perth and Kinross	4
Shetland	1
South Ayrshire	2
South Lanarkshire	1
Stirling	2
West Dunbartonshire	1
West Lothian	4
Total	105

The survey response will have been limited as the target audience related to a subset of the mailing lists used to distribute the survey: the questionnaire asked for responses from kinship carers in employment or seeking employment.

The survey response is, however, in line with responses from other recent surveys of kinship carers, bearing in mind the specific target for this survey of carers in work or seeking work:

- Children 1st has conducted two recent surveys of kinship carers across Scotland:
 - in 2014 a paper and online survey received 230 responses
 - in 2013 a paper survey received 183 responses
- Grandparents Plus conducted a survey of kinship carers across the UK in 2012, achieving 263 responses

1.3 Reporting

This report describes the findings of both stages of the study. The results are reported on in three sections representing the three sections in the questionnaire:

- Kinship Caring – household composition, type of kinship care, age of child /carer and relationship to child
- Kinship Caring and Work – situation before and after becoming a kinship carer, impact of kinship care on work situation, support offered by employer
- Moving Forward – suggestions for helping kinship carers who want to work

The findings from the consultations precede the findings from the online survey under each topic. The term 'participants' is used to denote carers who took part in the consultations and the term 'respondents' refers to those who responded to the survey.

The comments shown in the Appendices have been copied verbatim from responses to the online survey.

Findings from other relevant reports on surveys of kinship carers have been included where relevant at the end of each topic *in italics*: the sources are listed in Appendix Ten.

2. Kinship Caring

The first section of the questionnaire asked kinship carers about their household and history of kinship care.

2.1 Household Composition

All respondents were in households where there was at least one adult and a child living in a kinship care arrangement. One in four (23%) also had their own children (18 years old or younger) living at home and roughly the same proportion (25%) had grown up children living at home.

A quarter of respondents were acting as kinship carers for more than one child: 24 respondents were caring for two children and three respondents were looking after three children.

2.2 Kinship Care Arrangements

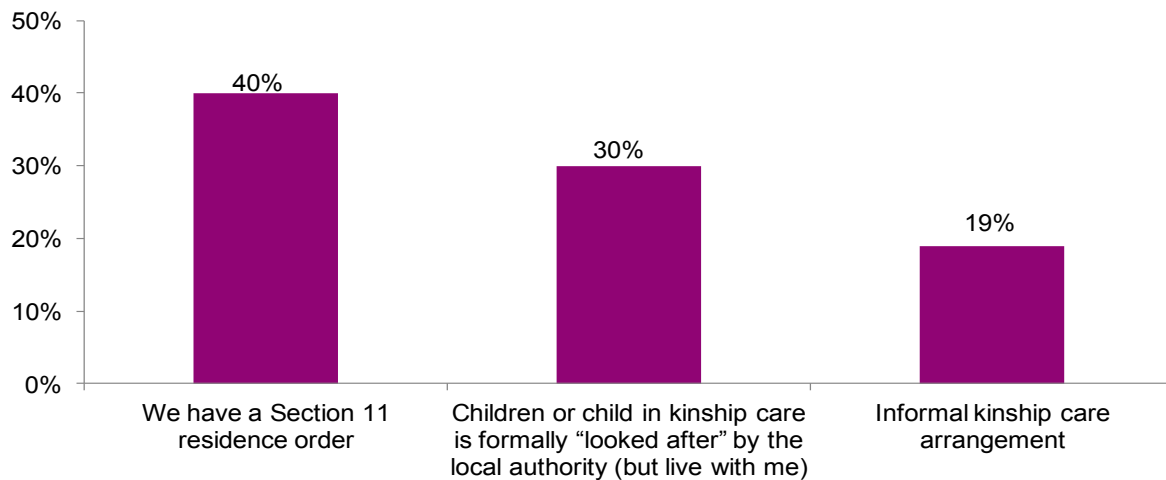
Although the consultations were open to both formal and informal carers, the majority of participants were caring under formal arrangements. This reflects the recruitment of carers via existing support groups: local support workers acknowledged the issues of contacting informal carers who were not registered under a Section 11 residence order or as 'looked after' by the local authority².

Respondents' kinship care arrangements confirmed the pattern from the consultations. They were most likely to be under a Section 11 residence order (40%), with 30% of children formally "looked after" and 19% in an informal arrangement. Three respondents selected both options for formal care, but their responses suggest that this may be due to a misunderstanding about the terminology as all three were kinship carers for only one child. There were 21 'other' responses to this question: these were a mix of comments on the respondent's circumstances and other descriptions of kinship care arrangements (see Appendix Four for list of comments).

² The Section 11 residence order is applied for by kinship carers through the courts under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014). A child is described as "looked after" by the local authority as a result of a formal decision by the court, social work, a Children's Hearing or the local authority.

Chart 2.1: Kinship care arrangement

Base = all respondents



University of Bristol research based on 2001 Census data concluded that there were 15,433 children in kinship care in Scotland, with approximately 5,200 in formal arrangements (Section 11 or "looked after") (see Appendix One for definitions of kinship care). The report confirms that it is difficult to identify the numbers of children in informal care arrangements due to the nature of the arrangement. In 2013 a Mentor report identified that the figure for children in Scotland in formally "looked after" care had doubled between 2001 and 2007, and that this group formed approximately one in five of all children in kinship care. The most up to date data on children in kinship care is from a Children 1st report mapping kinship care support across Scotland in 2011 which concluded that there were 3,917 children formally "looked after".

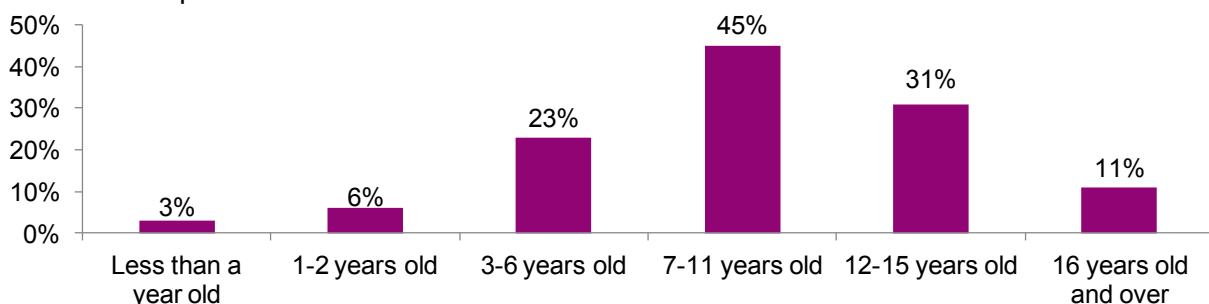
2.3 Age of Children in Kinship Care

Respondents reported that nearly half the children (45%) in kinship care were aged 7-11 years old and a third were aged between 12 and 15 years old. The proportion of older children (over 15 - 11%) and younger children (under three - 9%) was similar.

One notable feature of the age of children was that younger children (under seven) were unlikely to be in informal care arrangements.

Chart 2.1: Age of children in kinship care

Base = all respondents

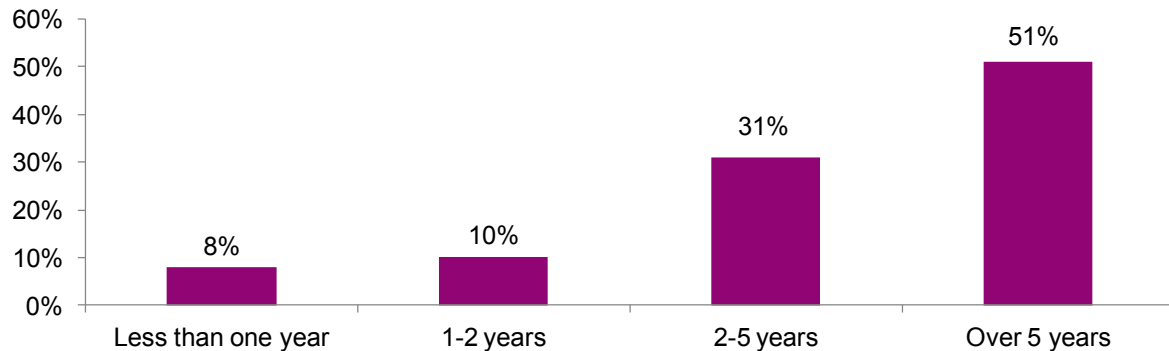


2.4 Length of Time as Kinship Carer

Over half the respondents had been kinship carers for more than five years, with only 18% saying they had been a carer for less than two years.

Chart 2.2: Length of time as kinship carer

Base = all respondents



2.5 Profile of Kinship Carer

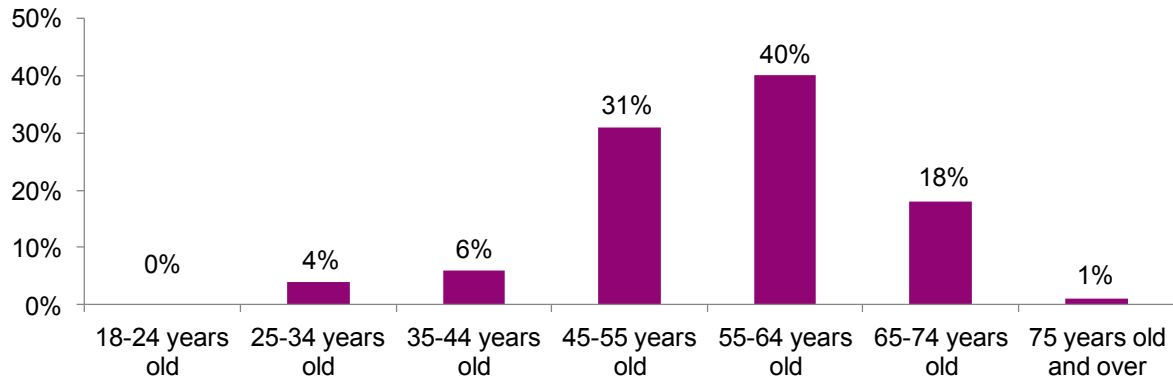
The overwhelming majority of kinship carers were grandparents - 70% were grandmothers and 15% grandfathers - while just over one in ten (12%) were an aunt or uncle and 5% were friends. Other relationships were great grandparents/great uncle/aunt (4 respondents), step grandparents (2 respondents) and second cousin (1 respondent).

Data from previous research (University of Bristol) suggested that up to 54% of children were living with grandparents, 31% with siblings and 15% with other relatives. This survey did not have any responses from sibling kinship carers, and included a very high proportion of grandparents: this may reflect the large number of respondents involved in formal care arrangements as children who are looked after by siblings are less likely than average to be in a formal care arrangement.

The age of kinship carers reflects the high proportion of carers who were grandparents: 59% were over 54 years old and only 10% were under 45 years old. The age of kinship carers is important in considering issues around employment: Section Three explores this further.

Chart 2.3: Age of kinship carer

Base = all respondents



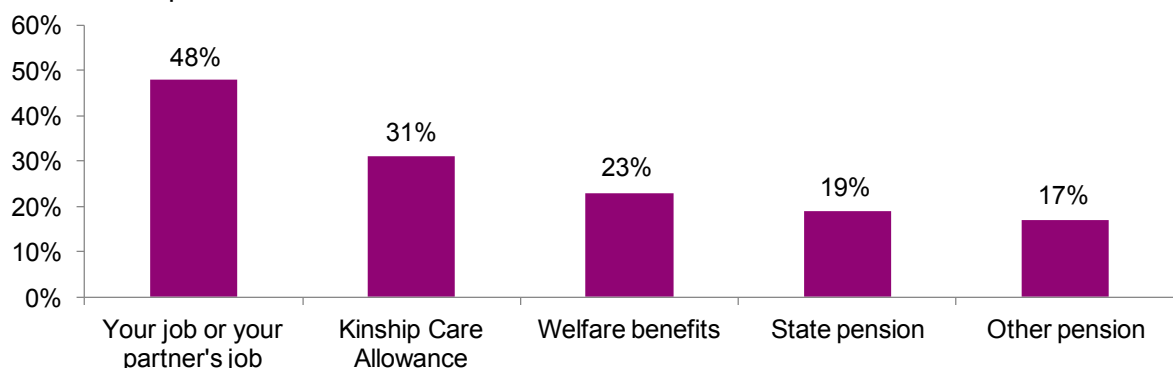
The age profile of carers was confirmed in research conducted by the University of Bristol which identified that most grandparent carers were aged 41 or over and one in four were aged 65 or over.

2.6 Main Source of Household Income

The main sources of household income were employment income (48%) or Kinship Care Allowance (31%) (see Appendix One for description of Kinship Care Allowance). These two sources were most important for 25-55 year olds, whilst older age groups were most likely to rely on state/other pensions. A quarter of carers said that welfare benefits were the main source of household income: carers in informal kinship care arrangements were more likely than average to rely on benefits (benefits were the main source of income for 30%). Other income sources were savings, tax credits and "child support".

Chart 2.3: Main source of household income

Base = all respondents



A report by Grandparents Plus identified a similar pattern of income source: 40% relied on job income, 30% on state or other pensions and 27% on welfare benefits. Although not directly relevant to this study, other reports (Mentor UK and Children 1st) have identified the "inconsistent" and "erratic" provision of the Kinship Care Allowance by local authorities.

3. Kinship Caring and Work

The second section of the questionnaire explored the impact of caring on the carers' ability to work and employers' response to employees becoming kinship carers.

3.1 Impact of Kinship Care Work Situation

The consultations identified that many participants had to reduce their hours and a few had to stop work when they become a carer.

Participants that remained in work when they became carers often had to change their working pattern to accommodate looking after child/ren:

- different shift patterns (moving to later shifts so as to take child to nursery/school)
- reduced hours to accommodate nursery or school hours
- changes to hours (starting or finishing early)

The reasons that participants gave for stopping work were:

- child needed full time care – under school age or with behavioural/health issues
- carer not able to cope with work on top of new caring responsibilities (very high stress levels)
- employer not able to offer any flexibility in working hours (e.g. refused to alter shifts)
- required flexibility to attend meetings (school/social work) and shift work did not offer that flexibility



“I’d just qualified as a holistic practitioner, but can’t work now I’m a kinship carer: it is something I’d like to do, but I don’t have the time.”



“Becoming a kinship carer affected my job as I worked full time and I had to take time off, but my employers were not at all supportive. They did put me onto part time work, but wouldn’t give me flexibility or any time off, so I had to give up work.”

The age at which grandparents had become kinship carers was perceived as a significant factor by some participants in their decision to give up work: they simply felt they did not have the energy to work and look after their grandchildren.



“As you get on, it’s hard to do back shift and then get up at seven in the morning for XXX to get her to school.”

Older participants identified additional factors relating to their age:

- they could not rely on their parents to help with childcare, as they had when bringing up their own children
- some participants were caring both for their grandchild and their elderly parents.



"I gave up my full time job eleven years ago as I didn't know how to find childcare – my mother-in-law had looked after my kids, but she's not in good health now."

Table 3.1 quantifies the impact of becoming a kinship carer on employment, confirming the findings from the consultations that the main impact is the move from full to part time employment. Although the sample sizes are relatively small, the analysis of the results suggests:

- one third of carers who were in full time employment are currently in part time employment
- 16% of carers who were in employment (full or part time) are now unemployed – the majority are not looking for work
- the proportion of retired has doubled, reflecting the age profile of carers: all respondents aged over 65 years old, except one, are now retired.

Table 3.1: Situation before and after becoming a kinship carer (prompted)

Base = all respondents

	Situation before	Current situation
	%	%
Working full time	51	15
Working part time - 16 to 30 hours	12	21
Working part time less than 16 hours	2	7
In full time education/studying	4	0
Unemployed and looking for work	0	2
Unemployed and not looking for work	3	12
Not working due to illness or disability	10	12
Retired	12	24

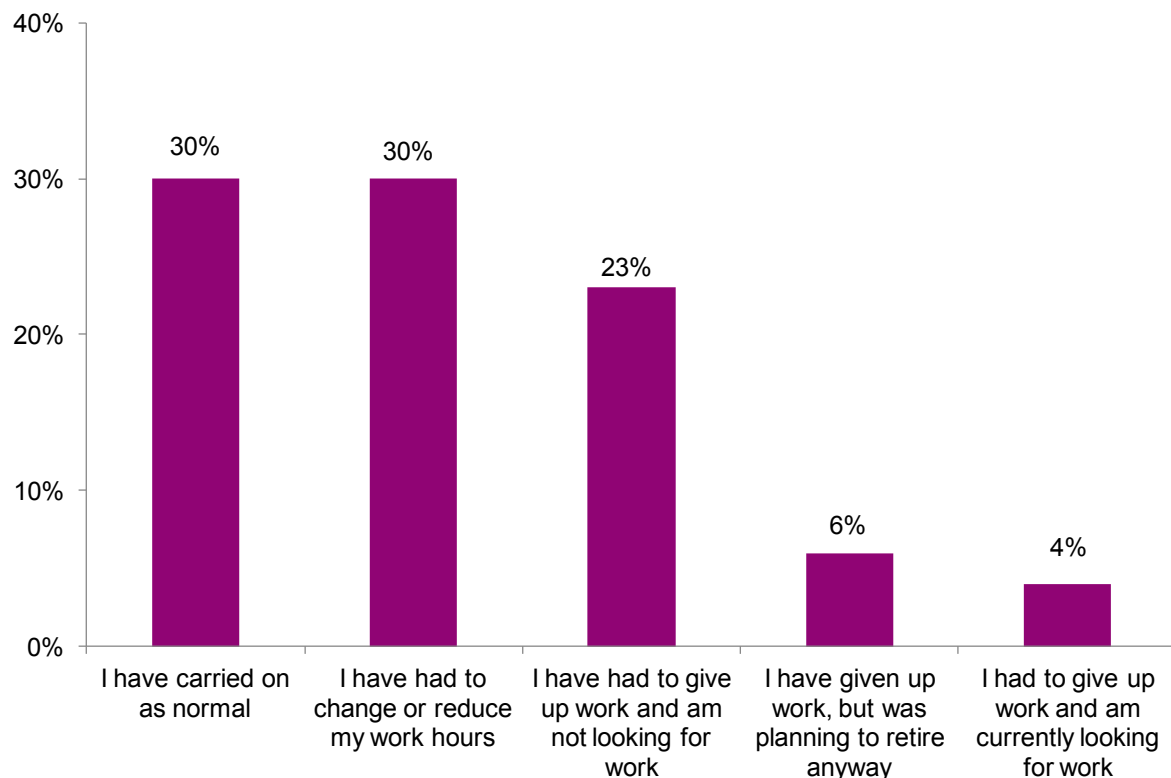
A consultation by Children 1st reported that 43% of kinship carers had to give up paid employment after becoming a carer, confirming the findings from this survey. The impact on the ability to work was also identified in a report by Grandparents Plus which showed that kinship carers found it "difficult to balance all the different demands of work and care". The Grandparents Plus survey results showed a much greater likelihood of giving up work and retiring, but this may be due to the nature of the sample for the survey (over 90% of the respondents in the survey were grandparents).

3.2 Overall Impact of Kinship Care on Carers' Situation

Chart 3.1 quantifies the impact of becoming a kinship carer through the responses to a number of statements about the respondents' situation. Although 30% of kinship carers said that they had "carried on as normal" since becoming a kinship carer, just over 60% had either had to change/reduce their working hours or give up work due to becoming a kinship carer. The breakdown in Chart 3.1 shows that approximately a quarter of carers (23%) had given up work and were not looking for work, presumably because of the commitment of required as a kinship carer.

Chart 3.1: Situation since becoming a kinship carer (prompted)

Base = all respondents



There were 54 comments from respondents who had to give up work or change their hours explaining why they had to make the change. These comments highlighted the range of issues faced by kinship carers in continuing to work:

- Children needed to be cared for/priority was looking after children (19 comments)
- Working hours not flexible enough to fit in with school day (14 comments)
- Health reasons – stress of caring for children (including ill health of partner) (11 comments)
- Childcare: external childcare not an option or costs too high (5 comments)
- Health/medical requirements of children (5 comments)
- Time needed to attend meetings/visits (school, social work, therapy, etc) (4 comments)
- Social workers suggested (explicitly or implicitly) that it would be in the child's interest if the carer reduced work hours or left work (3 comments)

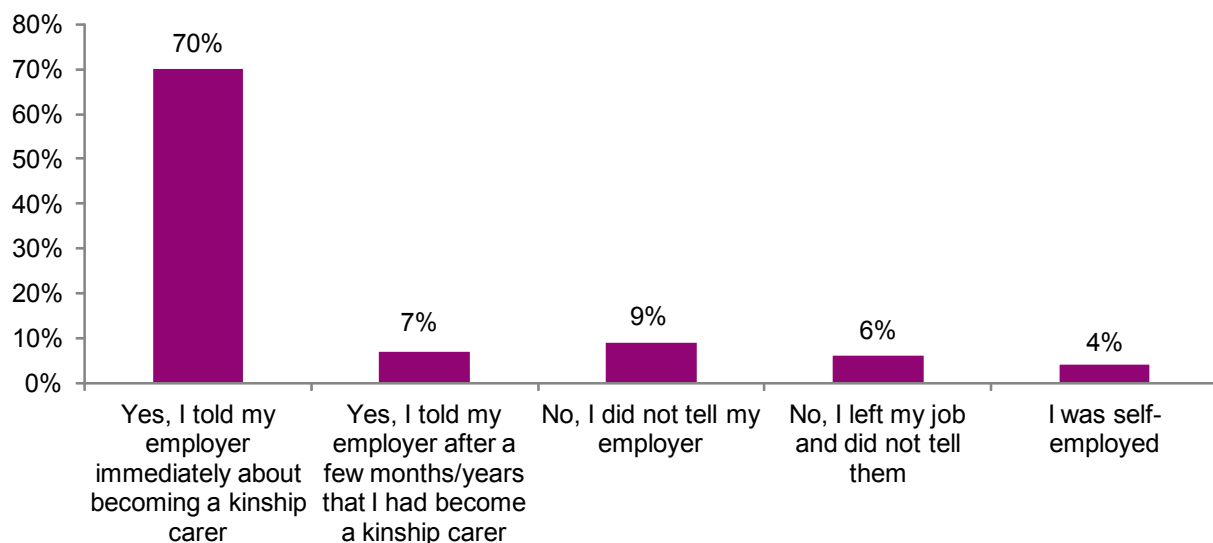
The full lists of comments are shown in Appendix Five.

3.3 Communication with Employer

Seven out of ten carers who were in work when they became a carer had told their employer immediately, and a further 7% had told them some time after taking on the kinship care role. Although the sample is relatively small (69 respondents), the results suggest that 15% of kinship carers did not tell their employer at all.

Chart 3.2: Communication with employer (prompted)

Base = all respondents in work when they became a kinship carer (69 respondents)



3.4 Reasons for Not Telling Employer

Ten respondents who had told their employer explained why they had told them:

- They were good, supported us because I worked for XXX.
- I had to tell them so as they could reduce my hours.
- I had to tell my employer so I could have a change in working hours.
- I told them right away as children needed me to spend time with them to help them through the situation.
- Was meant to return part-time, but was not in the child's best interests to leave him with childminder due to his attachment needs/anxieties.
- I knew it would be hard trying to juggle this new situation they were as supportive as they could be but both my work and the children are high maintenance situations. I am single and so there is no one to fall back on.
- To receive support as could no longer continue in current role, due to on call commitments with role
- As my employer was already the health visitor for the two kids in question she already

- knew more about their situation than I did and knew they were coming to me before I did
- I had phone calls telling me my daughter was needing to go into hospital and her partner was not a reliable man and not interested.
- Employer knew of daughter's death and knew I would take her children.

Four carers who had not told their employers explained why they had not done so:

- It was under control - school, after care, breakfast clubs and private sitters.
- I felt at the time it was my responsibility. Just didn't think they would want to know, feared for my job, because I had to work.
- I gave up my work to initially help my daughter with the children, but she was not able to cope and I then had the children full-time.
- When children first came to live with me I went on sick leave with the stress of everything. I had hoped to return on at least a part-time basis, soon realised this couldn't work, because of shifts. Put in notice without coming off sick leave.

3.6 Employers' Reactions

The consultations identified that participants had high levels of concern about telling employers about becoming a kinship carer and many carers avoided this until they needed to make a specific request. This reluctance was due to an expectation that kinship caring would be seen to reflect negatively on the carer.

These high levels of anxiety about how their employer would react had resulted in some participants not informing their employers of their new role at all.



"I worked for six and a half years without telling them – I felt ashamed and guilty and felt they wouldn't understand. It felt like they had no empathy with my kinship caring role."

3.7 Positive Reactions from Employers

A few participants identified examples of employers who had understood about participants' new role as kinship carers, although often other pressures led to the carer giving up their job.



"XXX gave me a year's sabbatical – unpaid – but I never went back even though they offered me hours to suit me. It's just too much work looking after the children for me to work."



"Although they offered me different hours, I felt I had no choice but to stop working to look after XXX. My employer was fine, but not that interested about my circumstances even though they were keen to keep me on."

Comments from respondents on the reaction when they told their employers about their situation showed that just over half were supportive. 29 of the 52 comments related to positive reactions from employers, as illustrated by the quotes below.



"They were very understanding. I was given 6 weeks paid leave to support her and upon my return they have been very flexible allowing me to be at home earlier in the evenings."



"Very understanding and I got time off to settle the children into our home."



"Employer had never heard of kinship care - neither had I - she was very understanding."

The full list of positive comments is in Appendix Six

3.8 Negative Reactions from Employers

In both stages of the study, kinship carers identified examples of employers reacting unsympathetically or negatively to the news that they had taken on the caring role. The survey results suggested that approximately half of those who were in employment had experienced a negative reaction, indicating the seriousness of this issue for carers. The comments in this section are combined from the two stages of the research



"Unsympathetic to childcare issues.....this is a council dept whose slogan is " getting it right for every child "



"I've got two grandchildren, one in primary school and one at high school and I couldn't possibly cover them both if they had meetings at school. One day I had to take off, work rang me and said "if you can't do your job, you know what to do". I realised I couldn't go on working if I wanted to take care of the kids."



"They wished me luck but offered no concessions re time off and had to negotiate my own changes in times I started and finished at work . Only discovered by chance that I could get tax relief by buying childcare vouchers via our payroll - 2 years after I started caring for my granddaughter. Had I adopted a child I would have been entitled to 6 months full pay from my employer but as a kinship carer I had to use all my annual leave after her birth to be at home with her for first 5 weeks."

A few participants felt that their employers had initially been sympathetic, but their attitude had changed when the kinship carer requested time off or increased flexibility.



"My employer was all right to start with, but then they got angry when I asked for time off."



"Initially great, but as time went on and the needs of the children's appointments and the numerous hearings and LAC reviews (6 monthly) they became frustrated and said they could no longer accommodate any paid leave to attend any meetings or appointments."



"Trying to explain my situation to employers is hard. My grandchildren have got complex needs and I can get a lot of calls from school when I'm at work."

A few participants had experienced incidents at work where they felt they had been treated differently from colleagues who had requested flexibility in their working hours.



"I asked to leave early as I had to meet social work at six – it caused problems me asking to leave five minutes early, but another colleague had just been given time off to collect their child from school."

- In some cases, kinship carers were aware that their employer was responding positively, but that their line manager was negative about their new role.



"Personnel really helped me, they downloaded all the names of childminders in the area and made sure I had the information I needed. I was completely out of the loop on childcare so that was really helpful. But my manager still said I had to start work at seven on a Friday, even though they had allowed other people to start at eight."



"My manager said "I really need you here at seven in the morning" even though she knew I had to get XXX to school – she wasn't as sympathetic as my boss."

- The attitude of employers affected not only the carer directly looking after the child, but also their partner whose income was increasingly important once the main carer had reduced or stopped work.



"My husband still works, but he can't get time off, for example, to take the wee one to hospital. He was told to take a holiday if he wanted time off or his pay would be docked."



"My husband now works six twelve hour shifts a week, sometimes seven, as he is the only wage earner. If he needs to take time off he takes it as holiday as he has never told his work about us becoming kinship carers."

- The negative attitudes extended to work colleagues as well as employers, with participants aware of a lack of understanding from their colleagues, including people they had worked with for many years.



"Workmates were worse than my boss, they asked me why I was getting special treatment."



"I kept quiet as I expected people to judge the parents, they feel that parents should have brought up their children better. All my social pals went when I became a carer, even at work, I couldn't go to any social events as they were at times I had the kids during the day. I told my friends I couldn't make events that were during the day and they said they would see what they could do – but I've never heard back from them."



"People never said anything to your face, but you feel they think you've mucked up. I felt embarrassed to tell people at work about my situation."



"You lose people you were close to: there were negative attitudes amongst my working colleagues who I'd worked with for 30 years."

- Participants highlighted that negative attitudes towards kinship care extended not only to the workplace but also to social workers and Job Centre staff.



“There’s a stigma attached to being a kinship carer and you are judged even if you explain what has happened – the whole family is judged, even by social workers”



“I worked for 16 years at XXX but when the second child came I had to give up. I got put on JSA contribution based but it was cut off after a year and the person in the Job Centre just said “You took them on” as though I had a choice. The attitude at the Job Centre was terrible; they said I wasn’t entitled to benefits.”

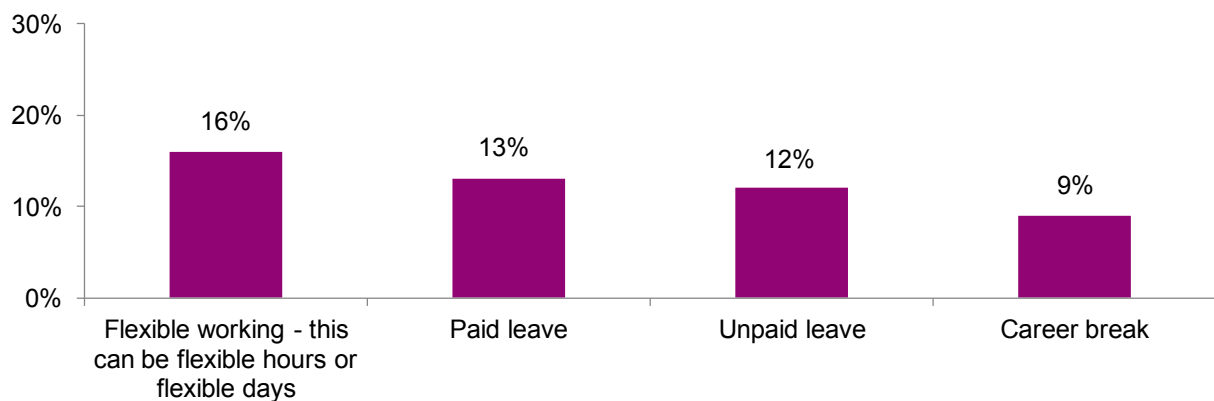
The full list of respondents' negative comments is in Appendix Six.

3.9 Support Offered by Employer

Approximately four out of ten kinship carers who were in work were offered some form of support by their employer. The sample size for these results is small, but the analysis suggests that flexible working was the most likely support to be offered, although approximately one in ten was offered paid leave, unpaid leave and/or a career break.

Chart 3.3: Arrangements offered by employer (prompted)

Base = all respondents in work when they became a kinship carer (69 respondents)



Kinship carers were very likely to take up any support that was offered to them.

3.10 Impact on Employment

Participants who were not currently in employment described how the role of kinship carer made it unlikely that they would look for a job voluntarily (two participants had to seek work as they were on JSA) because of the level of responsibility required to fulfil their care role.



"I have to be up at seven to get the four kids ready for school, then washing, shopping, cooking, cleaning till I pick them up at three. By the time I've made tea, made sure homework is done, and organised packed lunches, it's bed time and I'm exhausted. I couldn't do a job as well. On top of that, there's visits from social work and meetings about the kids at school."



"It's hard to hold a job down when it is so stressful at home – it's difficult to focus on work."



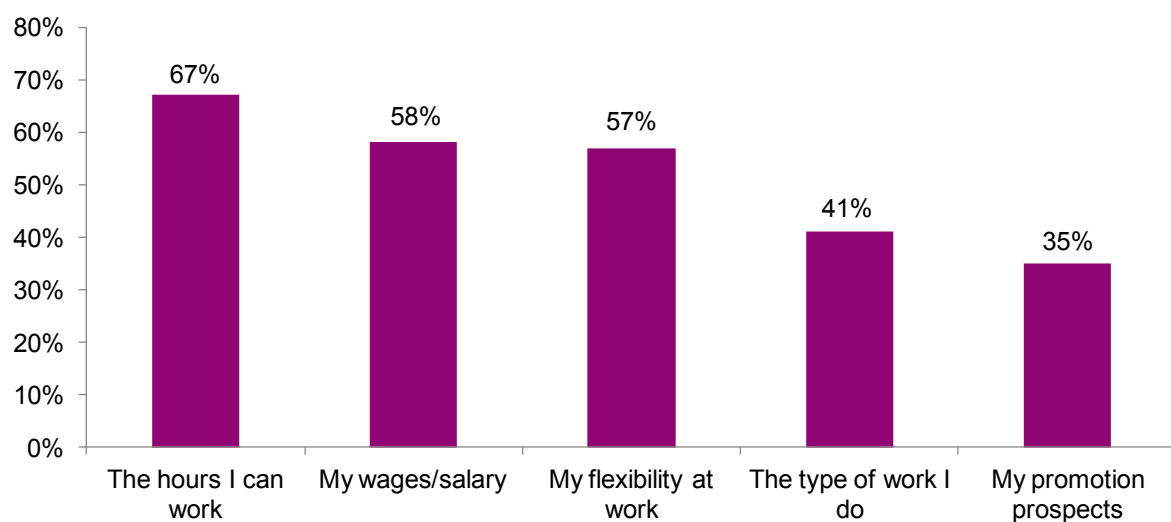
"I want to work as I need to pay for childcare until she's two. I can't work now but there is significant pressure from the Job Centre to take work and I'll get cut off for not looking for work."

Participants who had continued to work since becoming a carer recognised that their caring role had a significant impact on their employment, mainly because it affected the number of hours they could work and the flexibility they had e.g. to change shifts or work overtime.

Respondents confirmed the results from the consultations with nine out of ten respondents saying that becoming a carer had an impact on their work. Two thirds of carers said that it affected the hours they worked, and nearly six out of ten felt it had an impact on the amount they earned and their flexibility.

Chart 3.3: Impact of kinship care on employment (prompted)

Base = all respondents in work when they became a kinship carer (69 respondents)



Comments on the impact of caring on work confirmed the significant effect it had, mainly because of the lack of flexibility at work and the costs and/or limited availability of suitable

childcare. Paid for childcare was not, however, always an option when the children had special needs associated with their situation (several carers mentioned attachment and anxiety issues). Although there are free childcare hours for kinship carers' children from the age of two, this was not mentioned by kinship carers which may indicate a lack of awareness and signposting of this provision.

Key areas of impact identified from the comments were:

- **Economic:** the need to reduce working hours or stop work altogether had led to a significant drop in income for many carers

The financial hardship faced by many kinship carers was significant as taking on the caring role had led to reduced hours at work or giving up work at a time when their living costs had increased significantly. The financial impact was most notable in Dundee where two carers had signed on and one was reliant on the local food bank.

- **Health:** older carers highlighted the impact on their health of working and looking after children, particularly in creating high levels of stress
- **Social/emotional:** particularly for those who had given up work, the loss of support of colleagues/friends and feeling isolated were key issues

See Appendix Seven for full list of comments.

4. Moving Forward

The final section of the questionnaire asked for comments on ways of helping kinship carers who want to work.

4.1 Key Barriers to Employment

The issues identified by participants and respondents were:

- Flexibility in working hours – employers should recognise the need for flexibility and Government should make it clear what should be offered to kinship carers
- Access to suitable childcare, including out of school care, within working hours
- Subsidised childcare for kinship carers, including breakfast and after school clubs
- Legislative recognition – need legislation that will provide leave similar to adoption or parental leave
- Early retirement provision for kinship carers
- Assistance from social work (or others) with taking kids to school and picking them up to allow longer hours at work.
- Unions should make employers aware of the rights of kinship carers and work to reduce negative attitudes.

The key issues for respondents who were working or seeking work were access to suitable and affordable childcare, and access to flexible working hours. These issues were the same regardless of the age of the child: limited nursery hours, access to care after school care and during school holidays meant that there was a need for childcare until the early teenage years.

4.2 Suggestions for Support for Kinship Carers

Suggestions for helping kinship carers who wanted to work focussed on the following issues (Appendix Eight lists all comments):

- support with childcare – access to suitable care and general support (26 comments)
- financial support for childcare costs/free childcare (16 comments)
- general financial support/ paid leave (11 comments)
- flexible working hours (11 comments)
- better understanding/awareness of kinship care amongst employers (7 comments)
- paid parental leave (6 comments)
- free or subsidised after school clubs/breakfast clubs (6 comments)
- specific support for children with special needs/health problems (5 comments)

- more support from social work (4 comments)

The final question asked respondents if there were barriers to work that they had not the opportunity to express in their survey responses. Twelve respondents commented on this: their answers related to the stress caused by taking on the kinship care role, particularly if there was a disabled child in the household, and wider issues relating to benefits and support available to kinship carers (see Appendix Nine for all comments).

5. Summary and Conclusions

This section describes the summary of the results and conclusions drawn from the research. The recommendations made as a result of the study can be accessed at [http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/media/825937/pasbriefingapril2016\[2\].pdf](http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/media/825937/pasbriefingapril2016[2].pdf).

- The response to the survey of 106 completed questionnaires was reasonable given the targeted nature of the survey and response rates from other surveys of kinship carers. It does, however, highlight the problem of obtaining the views of informal kinship carers who comprise at least two thirds or more of kinship carers in Scotland.

Grandparents were most likely to respond to the survey, possibly reflecting the high proportion of older carers in formal care arrangements and, therefore, in contact with their local authority and other organisations. The age profile of respondents (approximately six out of ten were over 54 years old) had an impact on the profile of employment and on the main source of income.

- Half the carers relied on income from employment as their main source of income, highlighting the importance of employment income for kinship carers. A third relied on Kinship Care Allowance and a quarter were on welfare benefits.

Becoming a kinship carer had led to a significant move from full to part time employment, and 16% had moved from employment to unemployment. Over half the kinship carers had to reduce their hours or had given up work. These findings reflect previous research and suggest that becoming a kinship carer has a very negative impact on the carers' employment situation, and, consequently, on income.

- The key reasons for carers reducing their hours or giving up work were the need to provide care for the child; the impact of working and caring on health of the carer; the lack of availability of flexible working; and the need to have time to attend meetings in relation to the kinship care role. Although it was clear that the need to provide emotional and physical support to the children was significant, it was also apparent that the availability of flexible working hours and appropriate childcare would reduce the impact on the carers' work situation.
- Seven out of ten carers had informed their employer when they became a kinship carer, but approximately 15% had not told their employer. Regardless of whether or not they had informed their employer, carers had high levels of concern about the employers' reaction.
- These fears of negative responses from employers appear to have been justified, with half the carers providing feedback on negative employer responses. The main responses related to refusing time off to deal with childcare issues or to attend meetings and

employers being outwardly sympathetic but becoming "angry" and "frustrated" with continued requests for time off or flexible working.

- Examples of employers reacting positively related to: a generally supportive/sympathetic attitudes; being able to work flexible hours or part-time; and being offered paid or unpaid leave.
- Whilst many carers were able to provide positive examples of employer reactions, the research suggests that there are real issues with employers' lack of understanding of the kinship care role and difficulties faced by carers. This lack of understanding is widespread, with carers citing examples of negative reactions from work colleagues and from staff in social work departments and Job Centres.
- Only four out of ten carers who were in employment were offered some form of support by their employers, and almost all that were offered support took it. It is not clear from the survey whether the support was offered proactively or reactively, but comments from carers suggested that their requests for support were often received unsympathetically.
- Nine out of ten respondents who had been in work when they became a kinship carer said that becoming a carer had had an impact on their work. The main direct impact on the carers was a reduction of hours and the consequent impact on their income.
- The research identified three areas of impact that reduction of working hours/income had on carers: the economic impact of the reduction in income; the impact on health due to the high levels of stress of combining work and caring; and the social/emotional impact of the loss of support and isolation.
- Suggestions from kinship carers on what would help those who were working or seeking work focused on access to suitable childcare, financial support for childcare/general financial support, flexible working hours and better understanding of the issues faced by kinship carers.
- These findings suggest that carers may be unaware of their entitlement to parental leave for children under five years old and of their right to request flexible working. It is clear, however, that many employers respond negatively to requests for flexible working unless they have a better understanding of the issues faced by kinship carers.
- In summary, the main areas of potential assistance/support identified in the study are:
 - practical support with accessing suitable childcare and financial help
 - increasing awareness of kinship carers and employers of carers' rights to parental leave and flexible working
 - communication with employers and other organisations on the issues faced by kinship carers so that they respond positively when asked for help

Appendices

Appendix One: Definitions of Kinship Care

We have used the following definition of kinship care: “people who are caring informally or formally for a child/children of a family member/close family friend on a full-time basis.”

There are a number of definitions of kinship carers and legal statuses. Some children in kinship care arrangements will have a formal status (usually either a Section 11 order or a Kinship Care Order); others will not be in a formal arrangement. It is difficult to find reliable figures for the number of kinship carers because the numbers of informal carers can only be estimated. While the absolute numbers of kinship carers (formal and informal) may not have increased that much, the balance between formal and informal has changed hugely, largely because of financial support for formal care than any other intervention or factor. The Children and Young People (Scotland) 2014 Act (due to be implemented in April 2016) brings in new provisions relating to Kinship Care Orders and Kinship Support and is intended to steady the balance between formal and informal kinship care arrangements.

Kinship carers’ entitlements in relation to benefits and employment will be largely determined by their status as a kinship carer. Some kinship carers will have assumed some or all parental responsibilities, which effectively means that they have all the same rights as parents in employment law. Other children in kinship care will be legally classified as a Looked After and Accommodated Child, and the kinship carer’s rights will vary according to the legal status.

What employment and other rights, a kinship carer will have will vary according to their legal status as a kinship carer. It is important to determine status initially in advising kinship carers. Where employers or kinship carers are uncertain about their status and consequent rights, the Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) Kinship Care Service can give information on legal status and rights.

The Scottish Government announced information about a new Kinship Care Allowance in 2015; we have appended an extract about this from the Scottish Government.

Extract from Scottish Government information on kinship care allowances

“The Scottish Government recently announced an additional £10.1m per annum funding for kinship care allowances. ...

The aim of the additional funding is to ensure local parity (i.e. within their local authority area) of allowances between kinship and foster carers. **NB - Foster care fees are not included in this agreement and are separate from it.**

This agreement will not apply to all kinship carers. It applies to:

- **all formal kinship carers** where the child has a looked after status; and
- **some informal kinship carers**, where the child is not a looked after child but is subject to a section 11 Order (to be known as a Kinship Care Order), and is or was
- previously looked after;
- placed with involvement from the local authority; or

- at risk of becoming looked after.

Kinship carers covered by this agreement should receive an allowance at a minimum of the same rate as foster carers in their local authority area.

Some kinship carers will be eligible for child-related benefits, which are intended to cover accommodation and maintenance. If a kinship carer is in receipt of any child-related benefits, then the local authority may deduct these from the amount of allowance that it pays to the kinship carer. In this situation, any additional payment to bring the allowance rate up to that of a foster carer is to be considered a wellbeing payment – the kinship carer is already receiving payment from the state for accommodation and maintenance and the additional money is to ensure that the kinship child is able to benefit from opportunities that

Funding starts from **1 October 2015**.

In the interests of transparency, each local authority should publish a revised Kinship and Fostering Allowances Policy which should include key details of entitlement, eligibility criteria, how it will be assessed, where more information can be found, where complaints can be made and any other relevant information. These policies should be published as soon as possible and local authorities will wish to update them on a regular basis.

In the interim, local authorities should publish their **current foster care rates by 1 November at the latest**. This is necessary to ensure that parity of allowances is clear and transparent for all parties.

Appendix Two: Topic Guide

Kinship Carers: Identifying Barriers to Employment

Final Topic Guide

1. Introduction

(Aim: to act as warm up and understand background of each participant)

- explanation of background to the consultations and reasons for consulting with kinship carers
- introduction from each participant
 - name
 - how long acted as kinship carer
 - age of child/ren
 - relationship to child/ren
 - formal v informal status *(note: allow participants to define this in order to identify terminology used)*

2. Changes to Employment Situation

(Aim: to understand employment situation pre and post kinship care)

- occupation/employment before becoming kinship carer
- did you inform your employer that you had become a kinship carer?
- if you **did not** inform your employer:
 - why did you not tell your employers you were a kinship carer?
- if you **did** inform your employer:
 - did you ask to change your work hours or other aspects of your job?
- did becoming a kinship carer lead to any changes in occupation/employment?
- are you currently in employment?

If not in employment:

- if previously in employment, what caused you to give up work?
- would you like to be in employment ?
- what are the main reasons that you are not currently in employment?

3. Impact of Kinship Caring Role on Employability (if not mentioned at 2)

(Aim: to explore the impact kinship caring on employability)

if not in employment:

- does your kinship caring role affect your ability to get employment?

if in employment

- does your employer know you are a kinship carer?
- does your kinship caring role have an impact on your current employment?
- does being a kinship carer have an impact on any of the following areas:
 - hours worked
 - flexibility
 - location
 - wages
 - type of work

- promotion prospects
- childcare
- have you asked your employer for unpaid leave or flexible working arrangements?
 - what has the response been to requests?

4. Attitudes of Employers

(Aim: to assess employers' attitudes towards kinship carers)

- what are employers' views on kinship care (e.g. how easy is it to approach employers about becoming a kinship carer)?
- what perceptions do employers have of kinship caring?
- have participants experienced any positive or negative reactions from:
 - employers?
 - employees/colleagues?

5. Summary of Barriers to Employment

(Aim: to identify key barriers to employment for kinship carers and ways in which they could be overcome)

- what are the main issues that you face in your current employment or in seeking work?

For each issue:

- what is the best way of overcoming this issue?
- what can the following organisations do to help:
 - employers?
 - local authorities/social services?
 - Government?
 - anyone else?

6. Summing Up

(Aim: to wind down the discussion by identifying key issues)

- prioritise the key barriers to employment?
- what one thing would participants like to happen to help them with employment?

Describe next steps: survey, reporting and setting up event for employers to discuss the results

- interest in seeing summary of results?
- willingness to allow contact details to be passed on to partners for future research/consultations?

Appendix Three: Questionnaire

Please help us by completing this questionnaire. It will help us understand the issues that kinship carers face if they want to continue to work or return to work. The return date for questionnaires is 11 December and all completed questionnaires received by then will be eligible to be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 voucher. If you wish to take part in the prize draw, please provide your name and address at the end of the questionnaire. All responses will be treated confidentially.

Once you have completed the questionnaire please post it back to the freepost address on the back of the questionnaire. Please fold the questionnaire as instructed – there is no need for a stamp.

The questionnaire is also available online via the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/qyyz56w>.

Section One: Kinship Caring

Q1.1 Which local authority area do you live in?							
Aberdeen	<input type="checkbox"/>	East Dunbartonshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inverclyde	<input type="checkbox"/>	Renfrewshire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aberdeenshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	East Lothian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Midlothian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scottish Borders	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angus	<input type="checkbox"/>	East Renfrewshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moray	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shetland	<input type="checkbox"/>
Argyll and Bute	<input type="checkbox"/>	Edinburgh	<input type="checkbox"/>	Na h-Eileanan Siar	<input type="checkbox"/>	South Ayrshire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clackmannanshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Falkirk	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Ayrshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	South Lanarkshire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dumfries and Galloway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fife	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Lanarkshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stirling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dundee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Glasgow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Orkney	<input type="checkbox"/>	West Dunbartonshire	<input type="checkbox"/>
East Ayrshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Highland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Perth and Kinross	<input type="checkbox"/>	West Lothian	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q1.2 Please tell us who is in your family by writing in the number of people that live in your home?			
Adults	<input type="text"/>	Children living with you in a kinship care arrangement (0-18 years old)	<input type="text"/>
Own children (0-18 years old)	<input type="text"/>	Grown up children (aged over 18)	<input type="text"/>

Q1.3 What age are the children living with you in a kinship care arrangement?			
Less than one year old	<input type="checkbox"/>	7-11 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-2 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	12-15 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>
3-6 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	16 years old and over	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q1.4 Please tell us about your kinship care arrangements.			
Children or child in kinship care is formally “looked after” by the local authority (but live with me)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Informal kinship care arrangement	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have a Section 11 residence order	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Please write in other arrangement below	

Q1.5 How long have you been a kinship carer for?			
Less than one year	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Please write in below	<input type="checkbox"/>
2-5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Q1.6 What is your relationship to the children that live with you in a kinship care arrangement?			
Granny/grandmother	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brother	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grandad/grandfather	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sister	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aunt	<input type="checkbox"/>	Friend	<input type="checkbox"/>
Uncle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other relative Please write in your relationship below	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q1.7	What age are you?			
	18-24 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	55-64 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>
	25-34 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-74 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>
	35-44 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>	75 years old and over	<input type="checkbox"/>
	45-55 years old	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Q1.8	What is your main source of income for the household			
	Your job or your partner's job	<input type="checkbox"/>	Welfare benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>
	State pension	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kinship care allowance	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other pension	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – Please write in below	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section Two: Kinship Caring and Work

Q2.1	Which of these best describes your situation before becoming a kinship carer?			
	Working full time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed and not looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Working part time - 16 to 30 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not working due to illness or disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Working part time less than 16 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>
	In full time education/studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please write in below	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Unemployed and looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Q2.2	Which of these best describes your current situation?			
	Working full time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed and not looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Working part time - 16 to 30 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not working due to illness or disability	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Working part time - less than 16 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>
	In full time education/studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please write in below	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Unemployed and looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Q2.3	Which of these statements best describes your situation since becoming a kinship carer?			
	I have had to give up work and am not looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have given up work, but was planning to retire anyway	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I had to give up work and am currently looking for work	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have carried on as normal	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I have had to change or reduce my work hours	<input type="checkbox"/>		

If you were not in work when you became a kinship carer please go to Q3.1

Q2.4	If you have had to give up work or change your hours, please explain why you had to do this.			

Q2.5	If you were working when you became a kinship carer, did you tell your employer about becoming a kinship carer?			
	Yes, I told my employer immediately about becoming a kinship carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	No, I left my job and did not tell them	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes, I told my employer after a few months/years that I had become a kinship carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	I was self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No, I did not tell my employer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable to me	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q2.6	Please explain why you did or did not tell your employer.			

Q2.7	If you told your employer, please describe your employer's reaction when you told them about becoming a kinship carer.			

Q2.8	Did your employer offer any of the following?				
	Flexible working - this can be flexible hours or flexible days	<input type="checkbox"/>		Career break	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Paid leave	<input type="checkbox"/>		Other – please write in	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Unpaid leave	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Q2.9	If your employer offered these, which of these did you take?				
	Flexible working - this can be flexible hours or flexible days	<input type="checkbox"/>		Career break	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Paid leave	<input type="checkbox"/>		Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Unpaid leave	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Q2.10	Do you feel that becoming a kinship carer has had an impact on any of the following areas? Please tick the box if you feel it has had an impact.				
	The hours I can work	<input type="checkbox"/>		The type of work I do	<input type="checkbox"/>
	My flexibility at work	<input type="checkbox"/>		My promotion prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>
	My wages/salary	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Q2.11	Please explain the impact becoming a kinship carer has had on your work.			

Section: Moving Forward?

Q3.1	If you are in work or seeking a job, how does being a kinship carer affect your situation?			

Q3.2	What do you think could be done to help kinship carers who want to work?			

Q3.3	Finally, did this questionnaire give you the opportunity to tell us about your issues and needs around barriers to work?				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes		<input type="checkbox"/>	No
If it did not, please tell us about the barriers to work that you face below					

If you would like to be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 voucher, please write in your name and email/or postal address below.	
Name	Email address
Address	

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.
Please now fold it as instructed overleaf and return it via freepost (no stamp required).

First fold here



Freepost RLZG-UCTA-RRTT
Scotinform Ltd
12b Timber Bush
EDINBURGH
EH6 6QH

Second fold here and tuck in to first fold

Appendix Four: Comments on Other Types of Kinship Care Arrangements

I was asked by Social Services to look after my grandson, but he is classed as a "not looked after child."
Kinship care approved by Social Services but not a formal arrangement. If either parent tries to remove child we are instructed to inform the police and child will immediately be back on at risk register
Although we live in Angus, kinship arrangements are with Dundee City Council.
In process of obtaining residence order.
Given parental responsibility by his mother.
Mother gave us parental responsibility 3 years ago.
Have applied for a Section 11 residence order, waiting to see if I qualify for legal aid.
We have no Section 11 although I would clearly like one. I took the twins 8 years ago and feel I have not much say without Section 11.
Sec 25 voluntary, however registered kinship carer, if parent made effort to change CP would be immediate
Residential Order for one and the other is parental agreement
I took my grandson from his house because he wasn't being cared for properly by my daughter.
XXX is in my care, I am his legal guardian.
Special guardianship order.
LAC child going into care until came to us.
Have grandchild part-time as well due to mum's ill health.
Private arrangement with Through and After Care team
My granddaughter was formally looked after until her 1st birthday, but she now continues to live with us with no funding provided.
Grandchildren live with me as both parents dead.
My daughter died leaving me legal.
We are now legal guardians - mother deceased, father not around.

Appendix Five: Comments on Reasons for Giving up Work or Changing Working Hours

I worked shifts including weekends, childcare would have been a major issue. Shifts were required to meet service users' needs.
I work in early years so when the 600 hrs [free childcare hours] came in I was unable to get my child to school before going to work, also there was no after school provision at school. My child had huge anxiety and attachment problems, very common to our kinship children so a childminder was not an option.
the cost of childcare
Childcare costs meant we had to reduce working hours as we couldn't afford to pay £150 per week.
My husband died, so had to leave work as I did not earn enough to pay childcare.
Reduced working hours to care for my grandchild and attend play therapy sessions with him.
There has been huge pressure from the Social Work Department around the fact that I still have to go out to work. My youngest son is in his final year at university and I was clear about this financial commitment from the outset. I find that attitude of the case worker unacceptable and sexist. As kinship carers we have to be available at the drop of a hat to attend meetings. These have been almost weekly in the last 5 weeks, on the days that I work. The baby has an excellent nursery placement, selected in consultation with social work, and we would have sought this for her anyway as we have found that a good nursery placement contributes much to child development. At every turn my work is raised as a problem, even although we do most of the transport of the baby and have never missed a meeting.
The amount of Social Work visits, visits to the school Guidance, LAAC reviews and now my LAAC Daughter's behaviour seems to take up way too much space in my head, along with the impact it is having on my biological children.
I couldn't study with a very angry child, also social work meeting, childrens panels. Taking her to and from school and meeting with her mum I had no time to myself.
Career break as job involves 3 shift rota, children in kinship additional needs and attachment disorder, child care major issue due to lack of awareness and skill in managing complex needs,,,,,,self employed whilst on career break to allow work with minimal care input.....
Fit school hours and child's hobbies/activities and emotional well being. Also gave up teaching at weekends due to unsociable hours for child.
I worked Full Time hours initially but reduced my Hours to cope with caring for the girls & after school childcare arrangements. Luckily I work with the NHS who were able to accommdate reducing my hours & have been very supportive of my situation.
I gave up working to care for my new born grandson. Now he is in school, I have started working part time in a school as that gives me the same holidays as him.
We have been kinship carers since my grandson was born my husband is 70 years old and not as young as he used to be so I only work one shift per week
I worked the first three years full time. I felt after this time I had to reduce my hours as I wanted to concentrate more on my grandson's needs
Changed my hours to fit needs of new baby and restrictions in availability of hours offered by childminder.

To look after grandson who at that time was 6 months old
I needed to be home to make the child's transition to living arrangements easier and I had no child care arrangements in place.
My daughter died leaving 2 children aged 4 and 8, these children needed me to be there for them to help them understand the changes they had to go through as there was no father support either. My main priority was my grandchildren. We all needed to help, support each other to grieve, go through the various stages of upsets, life and move forward.
Could not work full-time with a baby, would have meant baby in child care for 10+ hours a day, I am a Staff Nurse.
I had to give up to look after my granddaughter full-time.
I had to care for my granddaughter.
I had my two oldest grandchildren stay with me and could not work as Lee was only 4. Now I have my youngest granddaughter she is 9.
I gave up work for Declan, then I went back to work, then I had twin girls.
I had to give up work because my daughter was either ill in hospital or unable to care for the children.
I had to change from working days to nights as I had to be at home for the children and depend on my husband to look after children at night while I was at work.
I had to spend most of my time looking after the children.
Gave up my original employment, which was a day time role due to needs of children now residing with us. Although employer was helpful in me doing my role of Kinship carer it became apparent over a number of yrs that my position of S/V was being questioned & family life was being used as excuse by employer as reason for loss of personal work standard. It should be noted these were isolated & over a period of time. After 5 yrs and many changes within work I decided it was maybe better to change profession that better suited needs at home. I took on 5 months training role within new start up company in the care sector. After training was taken on a 16hr per week contract. This role I did for 4 yrs and took on a variety of roles in which I dealt with clients on a daily basis suffering from Parkinson's disease, terminal heart failure, amputees & numerous other ailments. During the period of working with a client who suffered Parkinson's disease I found the demands of home combined with the demands of client were having a detrimental affect on my health. Example lack of sleep, feeling lethargic & smoking more than normal. As this got worse I then tried to cut my hrs from 30 to 16 but still found this hard work. So on reflection I decided to give up my role and instead concentrate on my role within house as carer for grandson & kinship carer.
I reduced my hours because my husband was ill and was unable to care for our grandson
It was starting to have impact to my wellbeing. Having the child was fine it was all the external issues dealing with his parents and other grandparents that took its toll. Have tried to return to work but with my husband working shifts, our grandson doesn't do well with change so he didn't cope.
To meet the needs of grandchild and to prevent doing too much which would cause extra stress
It was too much for me working as a home carer, i was having to drop the baby off at my son's before I started work, then pick him up at night, take him home feed bath and see to night feeds I was shattered, and in the end I was working just to have enough to pay my rent and council tax. it was a nightmare, sometimes I done without food myself so as he could get.

I was working for the NHS as a mental health worker and have had to give it up due to the stress at work and stress at home with the children.
My husband and I took my brother's three children in 2005. I was working full-time, had a really good job that I loved and a good income. However, I was 51 years old and the youngest child at that time was 10 months old (other two - 4 years and 7 years). Felt I could not have given my best if I kept working.
My wife is disabled, had to cut my hours to help with the kids.
Finding it too stressful to cope with number of children and a high pressure full-time job.
Working full-time, but child requiring extra support. Found full-time hours too stressful and not enough time for child.
Both kids have severe developmental delay and other medical issues along with emotional problems and my husband has been diagnosed with depression due to the situation and he also has fibromyalgia which means I have had to give up a career in nursing in order to care for the three of them along with my own daughter
Due to not having some kind of paid leave while the child was very young and with his huge additional medical needs meaning I had to continually take time off meaning in the end although I had an understanding boss my job became unsustainable.
Social services requested me to do so to get guardianship of child (was working 40+ hours), was happy to return part-time, but child has attachment and anxiety issues making it extremely difficult.
Jamie has behaviour problems and I could not maintain child care at out of school clubs as they could not deal with his behaviour.
A new manager came to our establishment and could not give me the shifts that I used to do, which allowed me to get my granddaughter to school and be picked up from afterschool care.
My working hours were not suitable for children's school, as I started before school started. My employers said I had to work until I could apply for unpaid leave.
I worked in the care sector, and had to do shift work including week end and night shift, my employer would not give me reduced hours, and it is impossible to get child care for nights and weekends, so had no other option but to give up work. my little one has attachment issues so I have to be on call at all times to reassure her.
I had to reduce my working hours to enable me to look after my granddaughter, to take her to school and to pick her up from school.
I had to reduce my hours and only work afternoons now.
We were foster carers and had to give this up as my niece's boy lives with us on a Kinship Care basis and this takes up the spare room we used for fostering.
I am self employed, working in IT, with all of my contacts and contracts being in England. I now have to look for work in Scotland to be at home to support my wife and granddaughter. Being close to 60 I am finding it impossible to gain work with companies who do not know me. My prospects of finding work in my specialist field of work are poor and I will have to take menial work (if I can get it) to earn some money.
Divorce
2 of gran kids under 2 years old and 13 at school
I had to give up being a foster carer to look after my granddaughter as only live in a 2 bedroom house.

I have had to forego work opportunities that take me out of Edinburgh so that I am available to collect my great nephew if an issue arises at school.
At start I had to reduce my hours just to get Lewis into a routine, I have since went back to full-time hours, but I don't get kinship payments because I took Lewis from his home, but social workers agreed he was better off with me.
I had to give up work to become a kinship carer. I was told I would not be able to look after my grandson if I refused to give up my job. He had to be my only priority in life.

Appendix Six: Reactions of Employers When Told Employee has Become a Kinship Carer

Positive reactions

We are a very small voluntary organisation and I did some volunteering with them before I took up my full time post here. If they were concerned at all they did not air this they were very supportive and still are but also I am the only full time worker at the organisation so I think we are all aware that there could be an impact on both myself or the organisation but for now they are willing to support.
They were good understanding and supportive.
Very supportive.
They were very understanding. I was given 6 weeks paid leave to support her and upon my return they have been very flexible allowing me to be at home earlier in the evenings.
He was supportive and said he would do what he could to help
very supportive
Concern
My employer at the time was very good
Employer had never heard of kinship care - neither had I - she was very understanding.
Very sympathetic.
Employer was supportive by allowing flexible time to attend LAC Reviews and relevant meetings.
They were very understanding.
Very understanding and I got time off to settle the children into our home.
It was a life changing part of our life, employer said well done to look after someone so unwell.
My employers were really quite understanding and allowed me to do so.
They were very helpful.
They were fine.
They were very supportive.
My employer has been good.
Supportive. Happy. Willing to help me return to work part-time.
They thought it was a good thing. Morally it was but financially it wasn't as we lost a full wage out of it.
Work in third sector so employer very sympathetic.
My employer was very supportive and as I work with the NHS I qualify for Carer Leave and Parental Leave when necessary.
Happy to be flexible with hours
Supportive
They tried to help.
My employers were very understanding and helpful.
Very supportive especially at a time when I was upset and devastated. I was extremely lucky to have the health visitor as my manager's wife!
Very supportive and willing to allow flexibility as required.

Negative reactions

As I was long term supply ,effectively zero hours contract, I was told I had to work those set hours as I was needed on the shop floor at those times otherwise he'd need to find someone else who could .
Unsympathetic to childcare issues.....this is a council dept whose slogan is " getting it right for every child ".
An acknowledgment was given, but unsure if special consideration was taken into account
They wished me luck but offered no concessions re time off and had to negotiate my own changes in times I started and finished at work Only discovered by chance that I could get tax relief by buying childcare vouchers via our payroll - 2 years after I started caring for my granddaughter. Had I adopted a child I would have been entitled to 6 months full pay from my employer but as a kinship carer I had to use all my annual leave after her birth to be at home with her for first 5 weeks.
Theirreaction was would i still be able to work my shifts
They were not concerned either way , when my husband became ill and I needed time off I had to call head office as I did not think my senior or manager was listening to me after speaking to head office things and attitudes did change and staff changes also people leave regularly and I have had at least 5 seniors in the last 5 year this is very annoying having to explain my situation every time
I think it is best summed up by "benign neglect". I was told: "just keep the job going and it will be okay". I suppose this has worked in some ways, but being 60, and doing all the parenting that includes many sleepless nights, attending constant meetings, constantly dealing with emails and paperwork for meetings and then keeping my job going is just indescribable. The hostility that we have to deal with every week from the baby's case worker adds hugely to the burden. I do not know what the source of this hostility is. I have complained about it and there has been no action from the department. There is poor communication and we are treated like the worst parents on the planet, even although the kinship assessment was glowing. When the baby was about to be discharged from hospital the HR officer at work said to me, "you must be relieved that the baby is normal" (my daughter is on the autistic spectrum). After that I decided that I would not share any information with anyone in my workplace. The overall situation leaves one feeling totally embattled.
No provision for kinship carers only parents of children and adoption.
No reaction basically my problem. Although working for a solicitor who understood process absolutely no support given.
No reaction that I am aware of.
My manager was fine, but didn't offer any time off, but eventually gave me two weeks paid leave which wasn't enough.
They were not helpful or supportive.
They gave me time to set up childcare, but because of my job as a family centre worker I felt my girls needed me. Some of the children and families I worked with had similar situations as myself and depended on support from family centres. I was given so much time off then explained I would have to go back or leave.
Line manager - oh so you're leaving work? Nurse manager - what can I do to help?

I told my manager. I was a qualified nursery nurse working in a nursery. I asked if I could have a place in nursery for my grandchild, I was told no, I then phoned head office and they managed to get a full-time place in the nursery I was working in.
Why are you doing this? Your own daughter is grown up and you have your career, what about you and your life. They had a point. They also said I could take some flexibility working hours and gave me a week off to get myself set up. Can I point out the maternity leave or adoption leave is much more generous but as a kinship carer it is not available to you.
Very sympathetic. However, did begin to talk to me about retirement.
Initially great, but as time went on and the needs of the children's appointments and the numerous hearings and LAAC reviews (6 monthly) they became frustrated and said they could no longer accommodate any paid leave to attend any meetings or appointments.
Supportive, however did not know what kinship carer was, and had no policy prescribing support
Very kind and understanding but unable to have me leaving work at short notice.
He thought it was an admirable thing to do, said he thought it would take about 5 years down the line before I could look back with no regrets and he was right. Also, he was very sorry to see me go after 21 years.
My employer knew before I did
My new situation at home meant I had to change jobs and find a new job with better hours.

Appendix Seven: Comments on How Kinship Care Affects Ability to Maintain or Seek Work

As a school janitor, it was difficult to get permission for getting away for twenty mins, even though I had cover for my absence so just had to get on with things even though it is difficult at the moment.....XXX council don't care about their staff.
I keep the work on track with excellent admin support. I come late, leave early and some days I don't make it in. I think I probably look exhausted and slightly ill kempt at times and this does not inspire the confidence of colleagues either. It is very difficult to meet all diary commitments and some things I just don't manage.
Less flexibility due to mainly having to work around school hours.
I had to start at a set time and finish to pick up from nursery. I couldn't stay and help if there were things that needed finished or help when there was an emergency.
As I am raising my grandson alone, childcare has always been an issue. So any job I take has to fit in with the school day.
My employment includes shift/overnight at the moment and my husband is able to care for my grandson in meantime as his health deteriorated I will ask for days but at the moment these shifts are not within school hours this is something I will have to negotiate nearer the time,
Kinship care isn't for people who hold down full time jobs, before agreeing to take the children we stipulated that we must have a nursery place provided for the youngest child. I was not prepared to give up work as the situation with the children could have been temporary. Also we never take time off and now don't have a great relationship with my employer due to requesting so much unpaid leave.
Unable to work full time or stay away overnight . More rigid working hours due to childcare
I have had to reduce my hours and if it wasn't for social work getting my granddaughter into nursery then I would have had to give up work.
I have had to reduce my working day & week and am not able to be as flexible as before and require to use all my annual leave to cover school holiday periods when childcare is difficult & expensive.
I had to reduce my hours - meant leaving a job I had been in for 10 years! Need to work Monday-Friday school hours - hourly rate decreased. Less money coming into house.
Having to do less hours means less money. Hours are still not covering child care, but I can't afford to cut them any further.
At the time the responsibility to make sure I had enough money, which was difficult because I had to cut my hours to take my granddaughter to school and then rushing to work.
I can only work so many hours as I depend on my husband to look after the children when he comes home from work.
Due to limited hours child care is available I can no longer work nights or weekends (I manage a residential children's unit for a local authority). Due to expectations that senior managers need to be on call at times I cannot apply for this type of post.
I have had to give up work due to no child care for nightshift or weekends
Unable to progress or further my career. Not many jobs in the NHS that are Monday - Friday 9 to 5 (child care).

Childcare
Due to childcare costs we can't work overtime
I had to give up work at the time which was an added stress I could have done without. My work colleagues were also my support network.
No longer working. Rely on ITCA and benefits. I miss the company of other adults, my independence and my self esteem has plummeted. Feel isolated at times.
Too much for me i am not getting any younger, next year i will be forced to look for work as my grandson starts school. but what happens when school phones to come get him if he is ill etc
I feel I can't do any extra hours, because my niece needs me there a lot.
It has affected all aspects as I had to give up a well paid job as it was impossible to sustain with the needs of the child we took on.
I had to give up working when we became kinship carers my grandson was newborn when he came to live with us and I could not leave the baby with my husband as he is a lot older than me My grandson is now 2 years old and I am now able to work one shift a week with NHS I am not able to work more hours than this at present
I had to cut my hours so that means loss of earnings, I can't do overtime so no extra money, paying child care means less money ,a lot of my holidays are taken up because of meetings I have to attend
I was a manger on a good salary .moved to benefits
Unable to work full-time.
I lost my wages, but my grandchildren needed me more. We used what savings we had for the girls, I also had care of my husband for 8 years he had Alzheimers.
Had to give work up to become full-time carer.
Due to not being given the hours/shift that I used to do I had to leave my job which was well paid to working in a local supermarket for a lot less money. I am also on sick leave at present and don't get paid when I am off sick and trying to live on £120.00 per week with no kinship care help.
Turned down promotion at same time as court order was in process. Couldn't return after initial 6 months as child was very unstable.
As stated couldn't foster anymore so a drop in income and any overtime. I have to take kinship into consideration.
Restricts hours therefore impacting on salary. Can't teach dancing due to being evenings and weekends which don't suit child for bedtime routines or time at home.
In my job as a nurse working more hours. 54 hrs a week. Despite kinship allowance. My husband lost his job No benefits due to my earnings. Flexible in that only work Monday to Friday. Husband at home as when both worked paid childcare £400 per month
Unable to pursue chosen career due to demands of job not conducive to brining up children with complex need (police officer on duty till work complete, court at drop of hat, days off cancelled at last minute. Kinship children require structure routine and the less unplanned change the better
I am now unable to work due to level of care required by the children. I could take on nightshifts but this would mean I had no opportunity to sleep
Had to give up work when my 2 grandkids moved in as 1 was 2 yrs old 1 5, 5 yr old had lots of learning problems kids are now 13 and 16

I was unable to work again. Caring for a child of 1 1/2 and another at 5 years and a very sick daughter was a full-time job. Caring for 2 children now ages 13 and 17 is still very hard work.
As I said I loved my job. However this was an unusual situation for my employer and therefore no options were given to me in 2005. I feel I would have liked to have kept my job, but the children were emotionally needing stability and full-time love and care.
Had to do less hours not being able to help when needed.
I used to start early in the morning and take work home with me. I now start later and can't put in extra hours. I now have to take school holidays.
Becoming a carer made it impossible for me to continue in my work, mainly due to shift pattern. There was also the extra household duties to consider, shopping, laundry which greatly increased. Then doctors, dental appointments, school activities to attend. Helping with homework.
Having worked in IT all of my working life (mostly down south) I will now have to look for work locally. With my contacts all being in England I am finding it impossible to find similar work in Scotland. Pushing 60, no one responds when I send my CV for what seem like tailor made jobs. It is a very stressful situation.
I had to leave work a bit before I was ready to go.
I don't have time to do so much work
I have my grandson as a priority now. An employer will always put business needs first and although they perhaps feel for the situation I am in, the job comes first and not my circumstances
My work has taken a back seat and my grandchild has to come first.
I have taken early retirement and that was not part of my plan but I would have gone to burn out if I had not done this. I have only been retired for 4 weeks and already I wonder how I managed it all. It was affecting my health and personal well being.
The children needed my support and full attention, so I was unable to work.
It has not impacted my work but I would not apply for another position in case I do not get the flexibility I currently have. I also travel to London a couple of days a month and need to arrange childcare, I am lucky that I have family to help out.
I worry about my wife as she is disabled and is looking after an active toddler.
I had to change jobs from community carer to cleaner, now I am in quality control.
I worked till 12am.
I became a Kinship Carer in 2008, it was very hard work living in 2 bedroom house, then I gave birth to twin girls in 2010.
The children are young so illness has a great impact and they lost my husband.
More pressure having to make up hours in the evening. This became harder as children got older and were later in bed, latterly I could be working till 1am and still have to get up at 6.45am.
I am very lucky. I work for the church and only work term time and am always home before school finishes so I have been able to keep my job.
No impact as such as I could arrange to work back time used with notice.
Not much, just a few months less money, but now I am back at work full-time and everything is okay.

Appendix Eight: Suggestions for Helping Kinship Carers Who Want Work

I think the social work department should help with finding childcare and helping toward the cost
Appropriate childcare at extremely reduced costs or free clubs
Better childcare for younger children and some kind of maternity type leave when a child first comes into the family. I got my nephew straight from hospital as a newborn with huge medical needs but got no leave from work other than taking due holidays
Finding affordable local nursery places
Free childcare
Proper childcare facilities with qualified professionals who understand the emotional issues that a LAAC child brings or even a once a week or once a fortnight evening childcare to let the adults out for a break.
More affordable and flexible childcare.
Child care for kids but age appropriate
Childcare should be paid, do not ask them to claim tax credits as this causes more financial uncertainty and stress.
Some kind of respite so that if I or others in my situation were in employment and a child had to be taken out of school early for whatever reason there would be someone trustworthy who could collect the child until the carer returned from work
Help to find child carers for the time kinship carers want to work.
Better help with childcare.
Let them keep the job they have. Pay child care costs for those seeking employment, also flexible working hours would help.
Child-care support.
Flexible working arrangement. Financial assistance with child-care. Assistance with child-care outwith school hours/weekends/holidays.
Finding child care for older kids (secondary school age) for children with additional needs.
Help with paying for child care.
Free child care to suit.
More child care facilities.
Maybe more places that the kids can go to, if carers are working.
Work fit in being a carer. After school paid for.
Child care.
If Kinship Carers want to go to work then something should be done about the kids going into nursery (if they are young enough) and something should be done with older ones after school, if you haven't got anyone to look after them.
To get full-time nursery placements so this will help in my experience. I didn't get this until XXX was about 10 months, but I just got 4 hours in the afternoon which meant I still could not attend Headways due to only being on at night.
To be given financial help as well as more childcare help.
Help with childcare. Especially if no tax credits.

Support training in child care, out of school care in understanding developmental trauma to ensure children are seen and needs met to reduce anxieties, flexibility from employer, and if longterm placement, leave similar to adoption leave.
More support in looking after children specifically those with disabilities who are not suitable to be cared for by a childminder
Child care. Advice.
Help with childcare. I started to receive Kinship Care payments 1 year ago and this covers after-school club. Have to spend money on children for clothing etc and Kinship Care payments could cover this rather than childcare.
Support with childcare options
Employers need to be understanding and flexible. The government has to form legislation? to assist kinship carers who seek employment or hold existing jobs
More flexible jobs in school hours, but then holidays are no good. Not sure there is anything. Really need someone who understands the child which can be challenging.
Flexi working hours, or work during school hours
They need flexible hours and a decent wage
Flexible hours especially during school holidays.
Flexibility with hours. Sympathy with the situation at home.
Recognition from employers allowing flexible working. Without this I would probably have had to resign.
Employer could offer more flexible hours to fit in with school holidays. Maybe get some help with childcare.
Employers understanding how much time off the carer might need in settling in the children, also time to attend meetings.
The reassurance that any financial help would not be taken away.
Support family, need more financial support and living support.
I would like financial help to allow me to be there for my grandson while he is young. As that is not forthcoming at the moment, more jobs to be flexible with the school timetable.
Paid leave, parental leave
Help with childcare, fees, after school clubs etc.
Assistance with home help would allow more time for the normal chores which are difficult to carry out when a child requires so much extra attention due to the traumas which led to the kinship care arrangement.
Employers being more understanding. More financial support for people in my situation.
More money and more support.
Costs with any child care arrangements/flexible working hours.
Pay them the same amount as Foster carers and give them the same training and support etc Let it be a recognised job the same as Foster Carers. Kinship carers do the same for the children in their care as Foster carers. They should be treated accordingly.
Help with childcare costs the same rights as foster carers and new parents regarding paid leave when the children first come to live with you

Paid carer's leave. Social workers who are not totally hostile and undermining, proper, tailored care for disabled adults who are parents....an understanding that while the baby absolutely comes first, other commitments don't go away when one takes on kinship care. Some briefing at the start about the parameters of the role was missing and we were misled as to what we were allowed to do at week-ends - where we needed my daughter's permission to visit a relative for example. None of this has ever been explained by social work.
More breakfast clubs /after school clubs so the child is not being moved from place to place .Greater understanding of families' circumstances and better pastoral care for staff
Free or cheap before and after school clubs. Flexible nursery/childcare arrangements.
Help with childcare or after school club.
More support for care ie after care, breakfast club and hours of the caring, ie not support after 5-5.30pm.
Available childcare, school clubs, breakfast clubs that don't cost too much, as this runs away with any extras and it is often the case of given with one hand and taken with the other. Everything costs.
Making sure the children they are looking after can get to school in time and are looked after when they come out of school to relieve some of the pressures on the kinship carers.
Free after school care or clubs might help.
Free after school care to accommodate full-time working and reasonably priced holiday cover from 9-5.
More contact by council, never heard from them or social work for over 7 years.
Childrens hearings not being dragged out! Paid leave supported by the council/government when LAAC reviews and children's hearings happen. Looking after someone else's children is the easy part of the situation, the constant hearings and loss of earnings when these happen is really unhelpful and social work looking to come out and meet with us is frustrating. All we want is to be left to raise these children and give them the very best start in life.
Not kinship carers specifically but how can companies be encouraged to consider employing people in their late 50's.
Understanding of our situation.
I think right from the start you have to work out what and who it will benefit. Kinship Carers need more support, guidance and information on getting back to work and what are the benefits for you and the little one, at first it worried me about him being in nursery all day full-time but he loves it he has other children to play with his development moves quicker there is so much benefit and for me it would be difficult to look after a child financially and give them what they need if I did not work
Unsure I have chosen to stay at home as I have another grandchild who is here under court order
Respite!
If I knew I would have done it and be at work right now.
Respite.
The thing is that these children are traumatised wee individuals who need the stability of their families, so sending these older kinship carers out to work is a difficult call.
I think we should have the same rights as a foster carer and recognised by the local authority.

Letting management etc be aware of what is involved in kinship care...I don't think people are really aware of what is involved or they would possibly be more sympathetic to our situation.
Employers have to be aware of the situation. Kinship careers situation is not well marketed and they are unsure of the restrictions you may have
More family friendly (kinship specific) policies.
Increased understanding of the pressures amongst employers.
Providing more support with attachment and anxiety issues for children who have been "abandoned" or moved from foster care to foster care.
Make Personnel Departments more aware of what kinship care is and what it involves for the carers.

Appendix Nine: Comments on the Questionnaire

Surveys like this can help to find areas where or who we can target to make things better for carers.
Did not think your survey was of use to me. Was only for people who are fit and young enough to work, because people who look after children are in situations that are quite hard.
There are a lot of other issues when you take this responsibility on, whether it is voluntary or through social work, it is because you care what happens to the child or children at the same time you feel nobody cares whether you can get a break at times or not.
I am currently going through change from DLA to PIP and if it is anything like ATOS reviews then I am about to go through HELL again. ATOS tried to force my hand by saying that if I can bring up a child then I can work. Complete lack of understanding that it takes everything I've got to care for this child
I have prob highlighted that some kinship carers also look after a disabled family member not sure I'll be able to go back to work at all. He wants you to take him to school pick him up and always be there.
Hopefully all kinship carers will be awarded extra income via the Government by bringing them into line with foster carers. It is not that we don't want to work, it is the fact that most either are older or already have their own children, this makes working difficult.
Don't work due to stress
Time is an issue. Combating two roles is another. I'm sure if I thought about it I could think of more
Someone to look after XXX, it would mean me not being there

Appendix Ten: Sources of Comparative Data

About Families: Kinship Care Factsheet (November 2011)

Children 1st: Financial Review for Kinship Carers: a consultation with Scotland's kinship carers 2012 (2013)

Children 1st: Consultations with kinship carers on the Scottish Government's proposals on secondary legislation for Part 13 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (October 2014)

Children 1st: mapping the provision and range of support available to kinship care families by local authorities in Scotland (2011)

Grandparents Plus: Giving Up the Day Job? – Kinship Carers and Employment (June 2012)

Mentor: Relative Support – a Review of Kinship Care in Scotland (November 2013)

University of Bristol/Buttle UK: Spotlight on Kinship Care – using Census microdata to examine the extent and nature of kinship care in the UK at the turn of the Twentieth century: Report (2011)