

## **Belonging in education: co-designing an evidence-informed model of practice**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

Central University Research Ethics Committee Reference: EDUC\_2042661

#### **1. Introduction**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

#### **2. Why is this research being conducted?**

Research shows that increasing numbers of children are missing out on education through school exclusion and low attendance, with children who experience other life challenges the most affected. This includes children who have experience of the children's social care system. The aim of this research is to explore and test methods for doing research and co-designing new ways of promoting belonging in education with different stakeholder groups including people with lived experience and professionals working in education, children's social care, and youth justice. As part of this work, we wish to undertake focus groups with children with experience of children's social care, and carers looking after them (especially foster carers and kinship carers).

#### **3. Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to take part because you are a foster or kinship carer looking after a child in care. We are interested in understanding how schools can help children to feel that they belong. We will be speaking to children about their experiences of school and what belonging means to them. We would also like to explore what belonging means from your perspective as a carer and how schools and carers do and can work together to support belonging in schools.

#### **4. Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the research anytime, without giving a reason, and without negative consequences, by advising us of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is **31<sup>st</sup> March 2026**. Any information collected before your withdrawal will be securely destroyed.

#### **5. What will happen to me if I take part in the research?**

You will be invited to take part in a 2-hour in person focus group where we will work together on developing a shared definition of belonging in education. We will ask for your views on what belonging in education means to you and why it is important and share with you a statement on belonging in education developed by a group of professionals for your views and feedback. We will also invite you to fill in a short demographic questionnaire at the start of the focus group, asking

your age, gender, ethnicity, if you have a disability or additional need, and if you are a foster or kinship carer. You do not have to provide this information if you do not feel comfortable.

## **6. What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?**

There are no anticipated disadvantages or risks to you taking part.

## **7. Are there any benefits in taking part?**

Your views will feed into thinking about how to ensure that every child feels a sense of belonging in schools. The voice of foster and kinship carers has largely been absent in previous research. This research offers an opportunity to address this gap and ensure that foster and kinship carers are directly involved in developing our understanding of how to foster belonging in education, especially for children with experience of the children's social care system.

## **8. Expenses and payments**

As a thank you for your time and participation you will be given a £25 voucher. We will also cover reasonable travel expenses for you to attend the focus group.

## **9. What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant?**

The information collected through the demographic questionnaire will be used to describe who took part in the research.

Notes and photographs of the outputs produced in the focus group activities will be collected to understand and evaluate the process of developing a shared definition of belonging in education.

The research team will write notes during the focus group. The notes will focus on the process of developing the shared definition of belonging in education and may include conversations related to the activities that take place during the focus group.

We may note down things that you say during the focus group and will use participants' initials in our hand-written fieldnotes to indicate who was speaking. The fieldnotes will then be typed up and participants' initials will be replaced with unique identifiers to ensure anonymity. The original fieldnotes will then be destroyed.

Only the research team will have access to the research data. Data will be stored securely by the research team at the Rees Centre and retained for a maximum of 3 years following completion of the project in March 2026. All information will be securely destroyed at this point.

## **10. Will the research be published?**

The findings may be published in academic journals, reports, and other public formats. You will not be identified in any publications. We would like your permission to use the photographs of the outputs from focus group activities, and anonymised quotations in our research outputs.

## **11. Data Protection**

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the

public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from the University's Information Compliance website at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

## **12. Who is funding the research?**

This project is supported by University of Oxford's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account. Grant reference ES/X004511/1.

## **13. Who has reviewed this research?**

This research has been approved by a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (Ethics reference: EDUC\_2042661).

## **14. Who do I contact if I have a concern?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research, please contact Alice Tawell ([alice.tawell@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alice.tawell@education.ox.ac.uk)) or Teresa Williams ([teresa.williams@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:teresa.williams@education.ox.ac.uk)), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the University of Oxford Research Governance, Ethics & Assurance (RGEA) team at [rgea.complaints@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:rgea.complaints@admin.ox.ac.uk) or on +44 (0)1865 616480.

## **15. Further Information and Contact Details**

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Dr Alice Tawell or Ms Teresa Williams

The Rees Centre

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