

# Research study *Young and 'care-full'*: The support needs of young kinship carers

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*'We're quite capable, we just need support.'*

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This study is a work in progress. It was inspired by international studies of sibling kinship care<sup>1,2,3</sup>. Since we can't identify sibling carers from our census, we have focused on young kinship carers (under 31 years) – a hidden group.

## Research Aims

1. To identify young kinship carers & explore their characteristics and support needs.
2. To identify opportunities to better support young kinship carers & children.

## Methodology

- Census analysis.
- Survey of young kinship carers.
- Interviews carers and children/youth.
- Action research: pilot project.

Everything just seems to be aimed at grandparents. But I think family dynamics are completely different, because we are raising our own children at the same time...It's a matter of understanding that and offering different support.

## More information

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Webpage

<http://youngkinshipcarersresearchproject>

## Early results

### 1. Number of kinship care households in Australia in 2011 (census data)

There were 45,182 two-generational kinship care households across the age spectrum, 9,705 of whom were headed by a person aged under 31 (20% of the total). By comparison, 14,063 (31%) of such households were headed by a person age 60 or more. In multi-generational households, the numbers can't be seen in census data, but there may be up to five times as many young kinship carers. **(Australian Bureau of Statistics data)**

It's not fair because I'm still young aren't I?...I'm not a grandparent, so I don't get help, and I'm not a youth, so I don't get help, so what do I do?

### 2. Carer interviews

So far: 17 female, 2 male; mostly siblings and aunts/uncles; mostly stable, permanent care. Emerging themes include:

- Arrested education and employment.
- Parental drug abuse & mental ill-health.
- Child development & behavioural issues.
- Needing practical & emotional support.
- Wish to talk to others in their situation.

### 3. Pilot national support service

- Service organisation identified.
- Model developed: online peer support & professional phone support.
- Expected start 2017.

## Call for collaboration

**We are seeking young kinship carers of all backgrounds to participate. Can you join this research effort?**

<sup>1</sup>(UK) Selwyn & Nandy, 2012; <sup>2</sup>(UK) Family Rights Group, 2011; <sup>3</sup>(US) Denby & Ayala 2013