



Information leaflet for Community Research Assistants

Can you help us understand more about how families care for and support each other? How does caring affect their wellbeing and opportunities?



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Hello! We are a team of researchers at the University of Reading and University of Leeds who are working with Reading Community Learning Centre, Reading Refugee Support Group, St Vincent's, Leeds and Migrant Support, Manchester. We are also working with researchers based at universities in Spain, France and Sweden. We are doing a study of caring relationships, inequalities and wellbeing in transnational families in Europe.

We are looking for community members with lived experience of migration and/or seeking sanctuary as a refugee or asylum seeker who are interested in working with us as research assistants on this project.

### What is the study about?

At the moment, we don't know much about care and support in transnational families in Europe and how this affects the wellbeing and opportunities of different generations. We also don't know much about how families use different languages, what their support needs are and how barriers to support can be reduced.

We want to find out about the care experiences of families who have relatives living in different countries. We are interested in children's and adults' experiences of caring - this may be for children, older parents or a family member with a chronic illness or disability. We want to find out how they support family members in their country of origin or another country. We want to

understand how caring responsibilities affect their wellbeing and opportunities for education, employment, social activities. We also want to find out about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected families. We want to compare experiences in the UK to those of transnational families in Spain, France and Sweden.

We would like to talk to different generations of migrant and refugee families living in the South East or North of England who have family members living in other countries. This includes:

- Grandparents and older family members who may provide care or have care needs
- Parents/ guardians who care for children or family members, or who themselves have a chronic illness, mental health condition or disability
- Children and youth (aged 5 - 25 years) who are cared for by family members and/or may help to care for others, including translating and interpreting.
- We will also talk to people working with migrant families in health and social care, education, language education and voluntary and community organisations.

We will think about what we've been told and compare this to the information from the other countries in our study (Spain, France and Sweden). Then we will write down what we have found out and share this with other researchers and professionals who work with migrant and refugee families. This study has been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favorable ethical opinion for conduct.

### **How can I help with this study?**

We would like to recruit a small number of community members who have lived experience of migration and/or seeking sanctuary as a refugee or asylum seeker and who are interested in working with us as research assistants. We are looking for people who are interested in working with families in the community, supported by the research team and your local organisation, in the period January - June 2022 and have:

- good interpersonal and communication skills
- a good level of spoken English and are fluent in one or more languages spoken by minority ethnic groups in the community
- experience of working or volunteering in the local community, with good community links and social networks among key minority ethnic groups.

You don't need to have experience of doing research or specific educational qualifications to become a research assistant. We will provide training in interviewing, participatory diagrams and other research methods we plan to use. We will discuss with research assistants the key research questions and the best way of doing interviews and other activities with family members (adults and children). We will provide training in confidentiality, anonymity and other ethical issues, managing the research data and safeguarding issues.

You would be paid on a day rate through your local community organisation. They would need to do a Data Barring Service (DBS) check before you start work.

The research team will provide a certificate giving details of the research training you have undertaken and of your role as a research assistant in this research project. This could be helpful for your CV and employment experience.

**What does a research assistant do?** The role of a research assistant in this project includes:

**Preparation (December 2021/ January 2022)**

- Take part in preparation meetings and training workshops with the research team and staff at your local organisation and in Advisory Group and other meetings with the UK team
- As a team of research assistants, help to identify up to 14 relevant families from minority ethnic backgrounds living in the region who may wish to take part in our study and discuss their situations with the research team.

**Data collection with families (January 2022 - June 2022)**

- When agreed with the research team which families will participate, the research assistant would explain clearly the purpose of the study and what it would involve for different family members. This is to ensure the family members give informed consent to take part in the study. Written consent is also needed from parents/ guardians for children aged under 16 to participate.
- Arrange to talk with 3 or 4 members of each family (children and adults) in an audio-recorded interview (up to 1 hour) where possible. Family members may live in your region, elsewhere in the UK or in other countries. Some interviews with family members living elsewhere may be undertaken using Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp or mobile phone. You would arrange with family members when and where the interviews would take place. Your travel expenses and mobile phone costs for arranging interviews and meetings with families will be refunded by your local organisation and we will provide equipment for your use.
- With younger children, drawings and activities might be used and an adult/ sibling/ relative may accompany them during activities.
- Undertake some participatory activities with family members, including mapping who they look after and who looks after them, inviting them to take photos or record an audio- or video-diary.
- Carefully audio-record the consent to take part and the interviews and discussions with an audio-recorder provided by the team and take photos of activities. These need to be stored securely on a laptop with a code number, until they are provided to the research team. Once they have been provided to the research team and a copy has been made and stored securely, audio-recordings and photos must be deleted from your laptop, audio-recorder, camera or mobile phone.
- Make arrangements with your local community organisation about the payment of travel and mobile phone costs and financial payments or vouchers given to family members who take part in the study
- Write notes of the interviews and how you found it, or keep an audio- or video-diary during the period you are doing the research with families
- Meet regularly with the other research assistants in your region, the project workers and research team to share your experiences of doing the research, data management and storage, reflect on the issues raised by families and your emotional wellbeing or other ethical issues.
- Help the research team identify 1 or 2 other families living in the region for more in-depth research, introduce the researchers to the families and provide interpreting support if needed.

**Feedback (July - November 2023)**

- Later in the project, we will invite you to take part in workshops with the other research assistants and families who took part to feedback the findings and work together with other organisations to design toolkits, videos or training materials. We hope that these may help to improve support for families.

- We may also ask you to help organize a community screening of a video or other products of the research and attend the final conference in Reading.

### **Ethical issues**

It is important that what family members tell you is kept confidential. Anything they say needs to be kept private and confidential so that people outside the family and other family members do not know what was said in interviews. The only exception is if you are worried that someone is being hurt or is in danger. If you or other researchers are worried, we will talk to the family member, where possible, about who else may need to know. This study is not linked in any way to any services or advice families may receive. Taking part will not have any effects on any services they receive. It will also not have any effect on their asylum, refugee or legal status.

When we write up the findings, we will use the information and data that you and other research assistants have gathered from families. But we will not use any real names and we will take care to write up their stories in a way that other people that know them will not be able to identify them.

### **What might be the good things about working as a research assistant?**

You may gain valuable research skills and employment experience which is transferrable to other work environments. The training, certificate and work experience you gain may enhance your job prospects. You may have the opportunity to attend events and activities at the University. You may find it good to listen to others' stories and see how your experiences relate to those of other families. It may be fun to do participatory activities with others in the community. We hope that the research will help professionals understand more about the experiences of transnational families with care needs and the barriers to support that they face. We hope it will help to improve support for families in future.

### **What might be the bad things about taking part?**

It may be difficult to listen to the life stories and experiences of others who may have had difficult migration journeys, ill health or problems seeking the care and support they needed. Listening to others' experiences may make you feel sad, upset, angry or distressed. Please talk to other research assistants, project workers and the research team in the regular meetings during the data collection about how you are finding the research and if it is raising difficult emotions or memories. If you feel you need more emotional support or need to take a break or stop the work, please talk to the researchers or project workers who may be able to help you access other sources of support.

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

No, it's your choice! If you don't want to take part, that's fine. If you do want to take part, please tell the project worker who gave you this leaflet and we can discuss it further.

**If you are interested in becoming a research assistant in the study and have questions about it, please ask us when you meet us, ask the project worker who gave you this leaflet or contact us below.**

Thank you, we hope to meet you soon,

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