

**FOSTER & KINSHIP
CARERS SURVEY
2018
REPORT**

**Central
Region**

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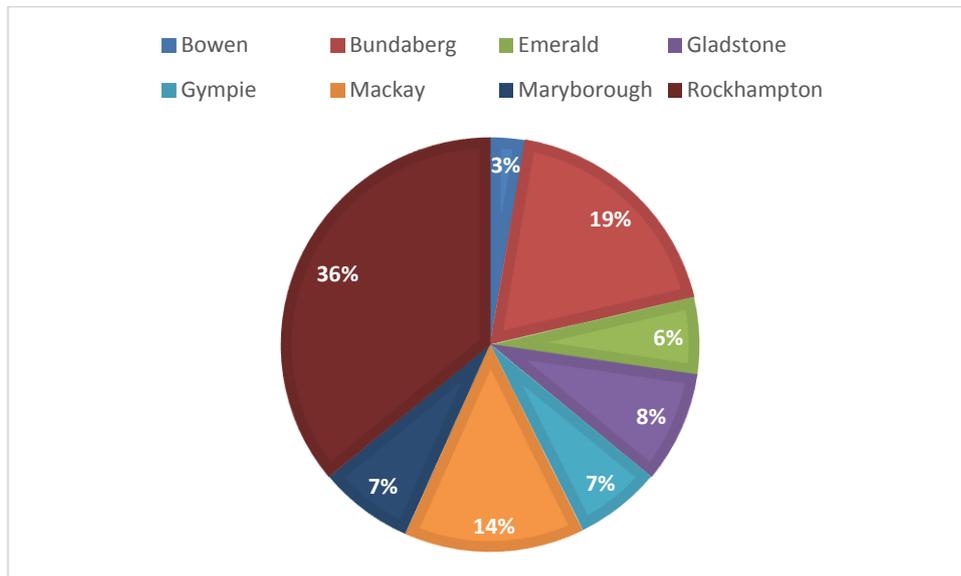
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About the Carer

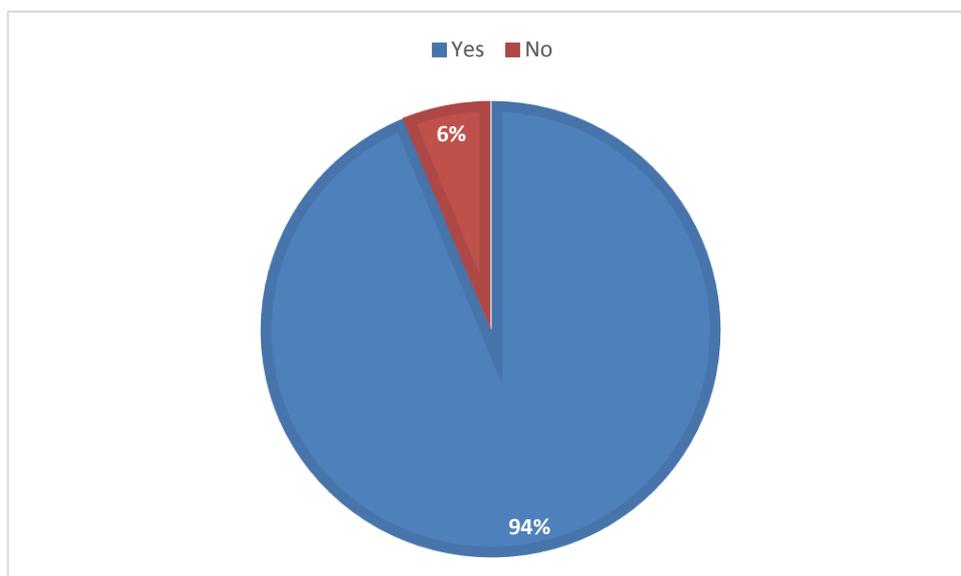
In Central Region 150 Foster and Kinship Carers completed the Carer Survey and were represented in the following Child Safety Service Centres, noting every CSSC was represented in the survey.



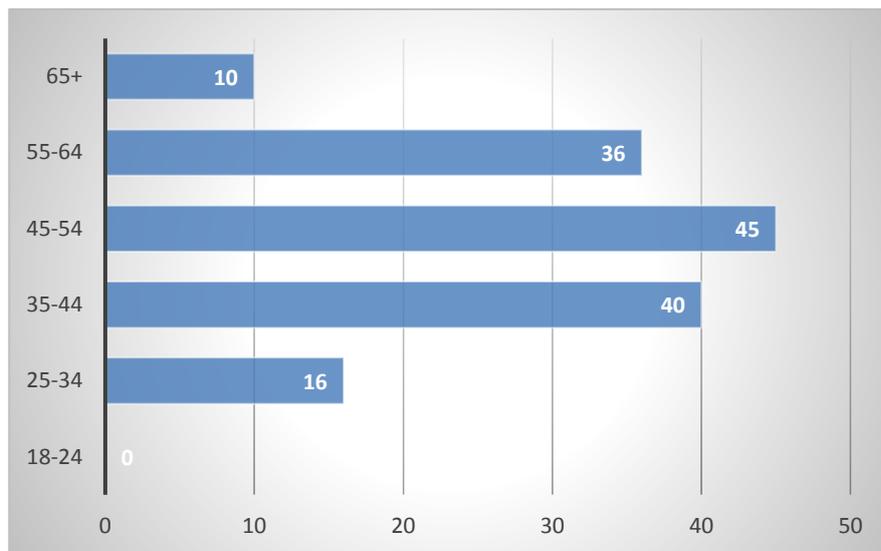
It must be noted that 54 carers from Rockhampton filled out the survey, Rockhampton had the most amount of carers across Qld who filled out the survey.

Of the 150 responses in Central Region, 118 identified as Foster Carers (78%), 32 identified as Kinship Carers (22%) and 2 identified as Provisionally Approved Carers (1%).

Carers were asked if they were supported by a Fostering and Kinship Carer Agency with the vast majority of carers in Central Region who completed the survey confirming they were.



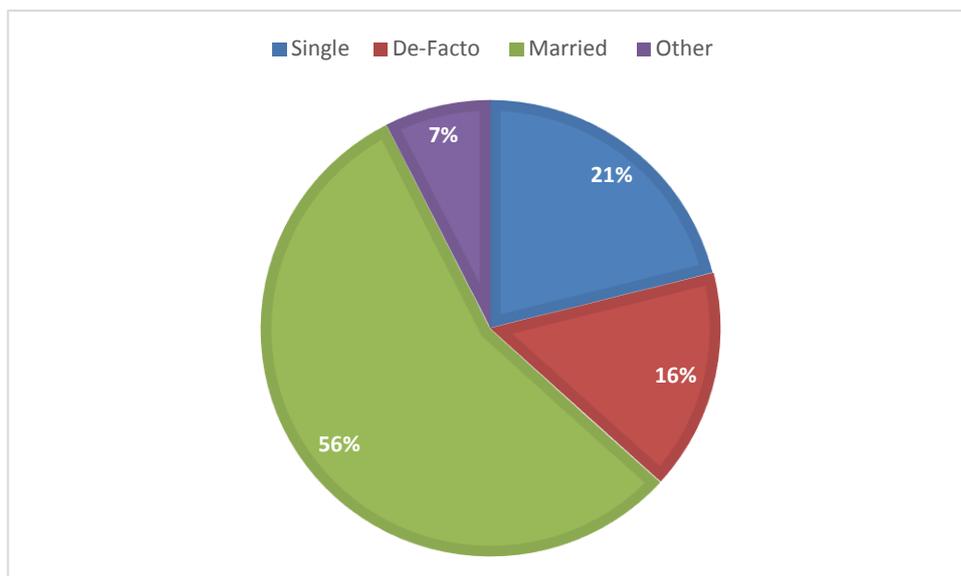
Carers were asked to identify the age group they fitted into.



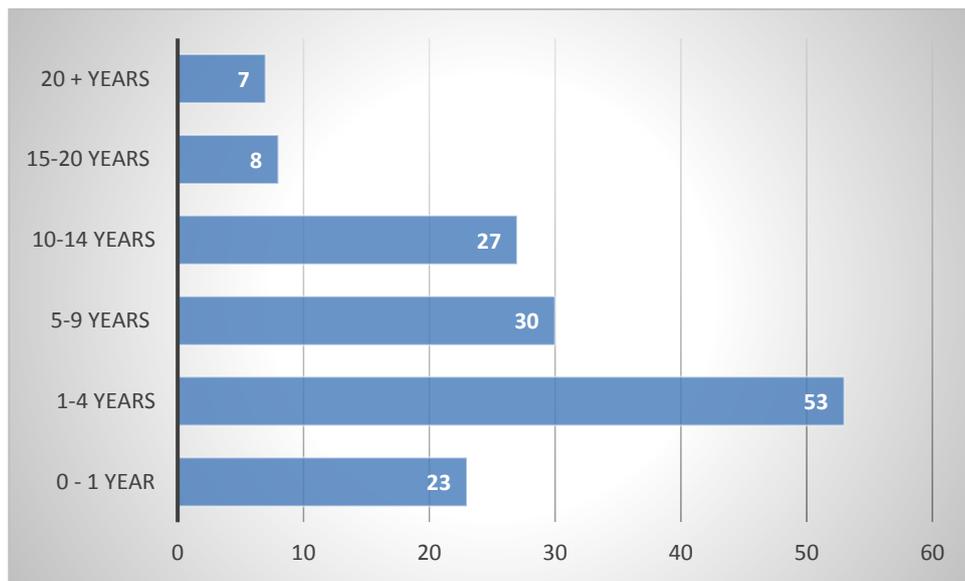
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Fifteen carers in Central Region who completed the survey identified as Aboriginal. No carers identified as Torres Strait Islander and no carers identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

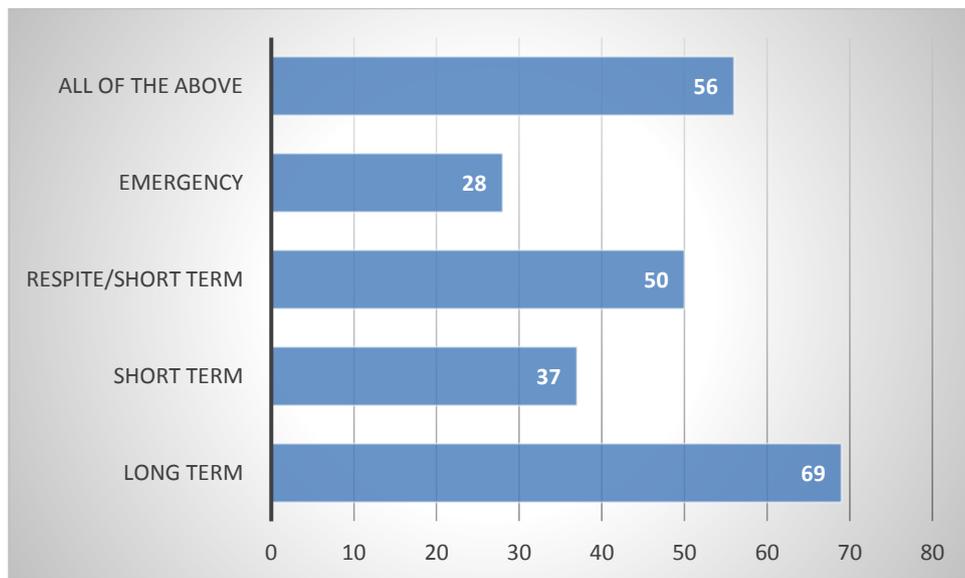
Relationship Status



Carers were asked how many years they had been providing care for.



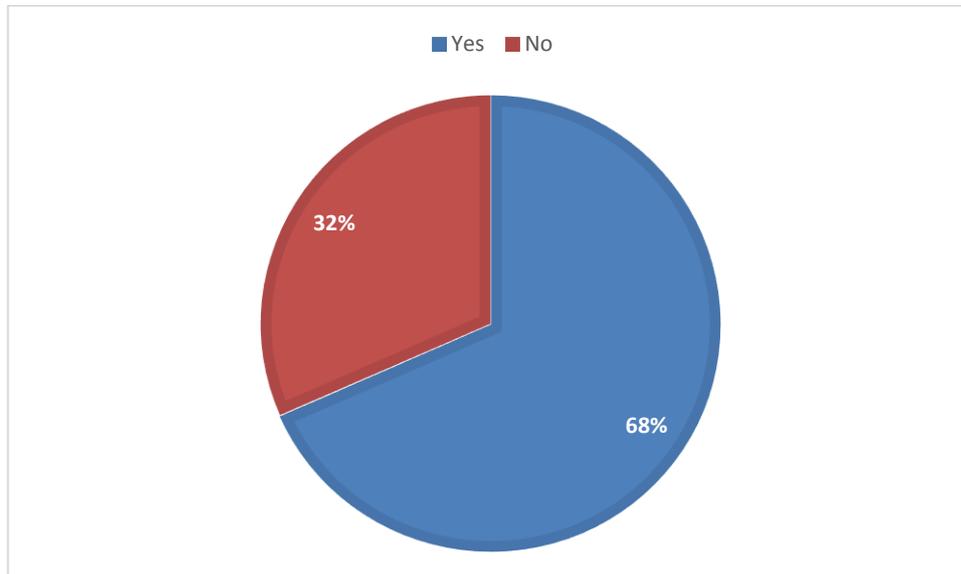
Carers were asked which type of care they provide, please note that carers were able to tick more than one type of care.



Cultural Diversity

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as follows:

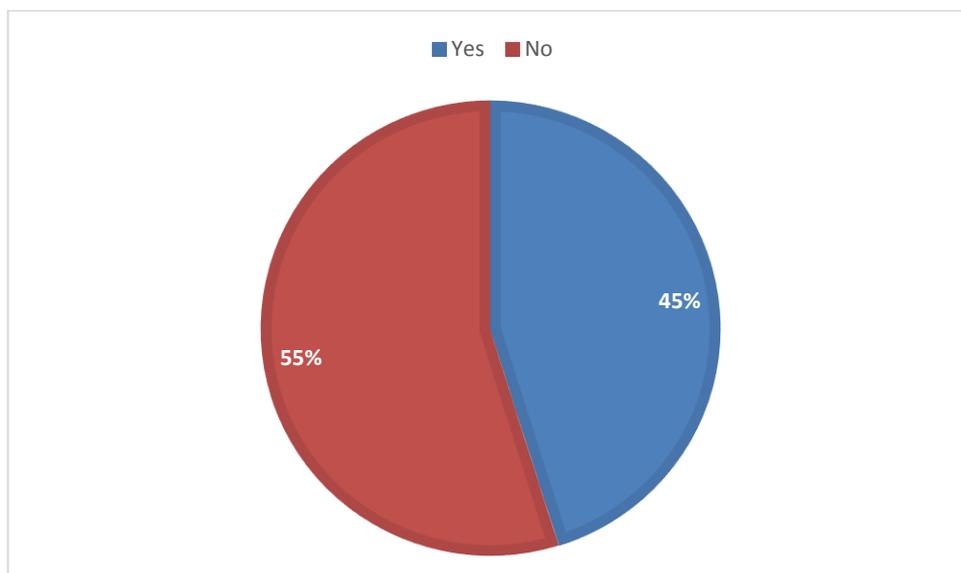
Are you caring or have you ever provided care for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child?



Given that only 15 carers identified as Aboriginal in this survey, the majority of those carers who have responded yes to this question would not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Carers were then asked if they had answered yes to the above question, whether they had a Cultural Support Plan in place. Only 41% answered yes to this question, leaving 59% of children placed in care where they identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander either without a Cultural Support Plan or where the carer had no knowledge of its existence.

Carers were then asked if they were provided with cultural awareness training to assist them to care for a child who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

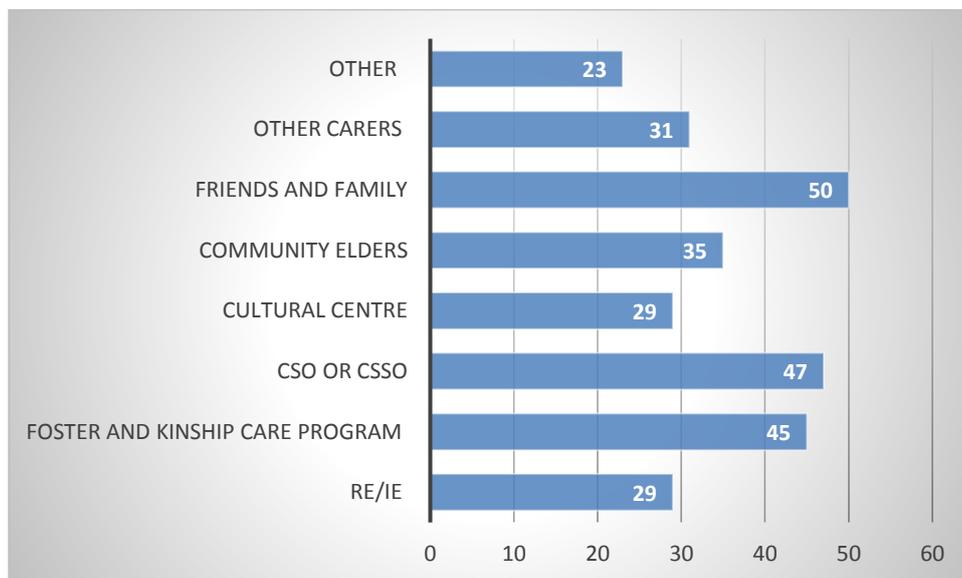


As evidenced above, more than half of the carers who responded identified they did not receive any training to assist them in building their cultural knowledge in their care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Carers were asked whether they understood the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principle. This principle is explored with Foster Carers in the Pre-Service Quality Training, however it must be noted that carers are inundated with information during this training and if this is not followed up with further education and information, it is likely it won't be retained by carers. The majority of carers reported understanding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principle with 74% confirming understanding and 26% identifying not understanding the principle.

This area requires some extensive work with recent amendments to the Child Protection Act (1999) that require carers who do not identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to have evidence of 'demonstrated capacity' when caring for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child. Furthermore carers will need education in relation to the introduction of 'Independent persons' and knowledge of other changes to the Child Protection Act that promote self-determination and family led decision making for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Carers were then asked where they accessed their cultural information from. Please note that carers were able to tick multiple boxes as sources of information for this section.



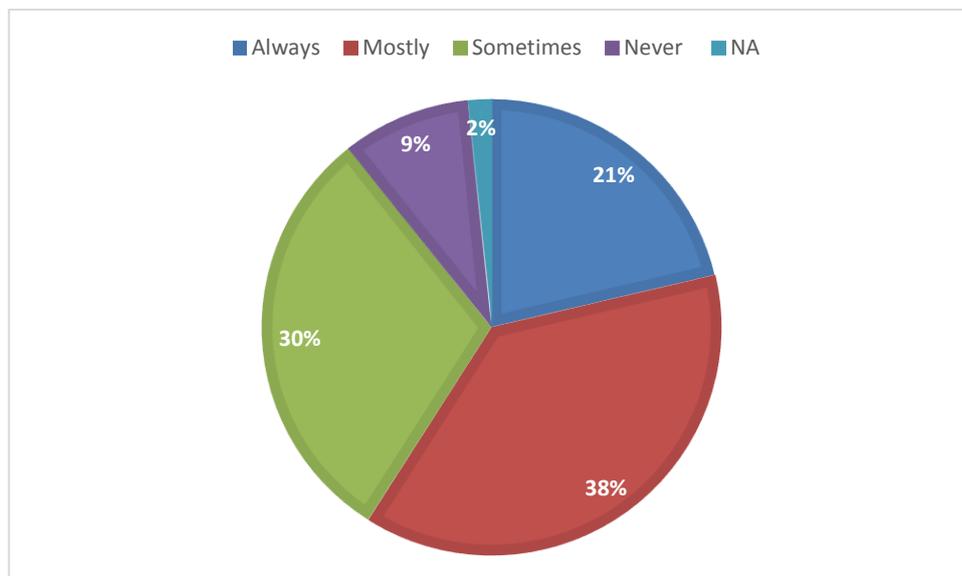
CALD Community

This is the second survey FCQ has sought to gather information from our carer community regarding the CALD community, specifically, how many of our carers identify as being from a CALD community and whether carers have provided care for children and young people from a CALD community.

Just 5% (6) of carers who completed the survey in the Central Region identified from a CALD community and 10% of carers in Central Region who completed the survey reported they either were or had provided care to children who were from the CALD community. Carers who had provided care to children from a CALD community were asked whether they were provided with appropriate training to assist them to provide culturally appropriate care. Unfortunately only 17% advised that they had been provided with training.

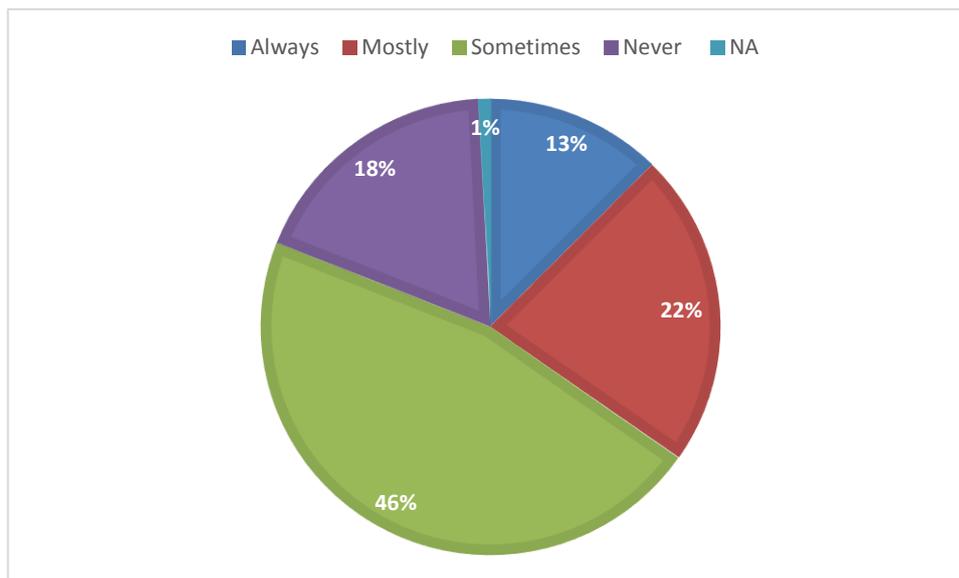
How satisfied are you with Relationships with Staff at Child Safety Services

Carers were asked whether they felt respected by their CSSC.



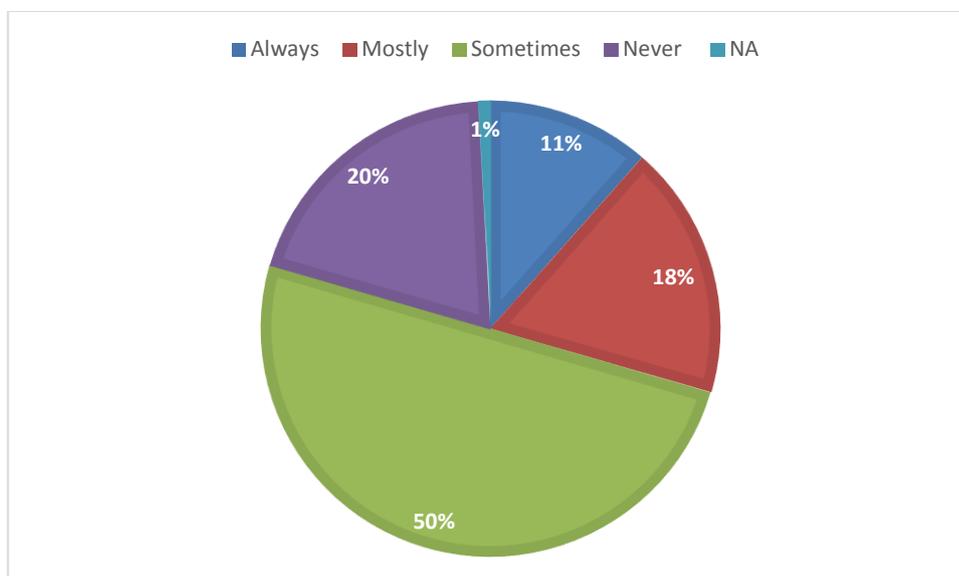
A total of 59% of carers reported feeling respected either always or mostly which is positive, only 9% of carers reported never feeling respected with 30% reporting they felt respected sometimes.

Carers were asked whether they felt part of a team.



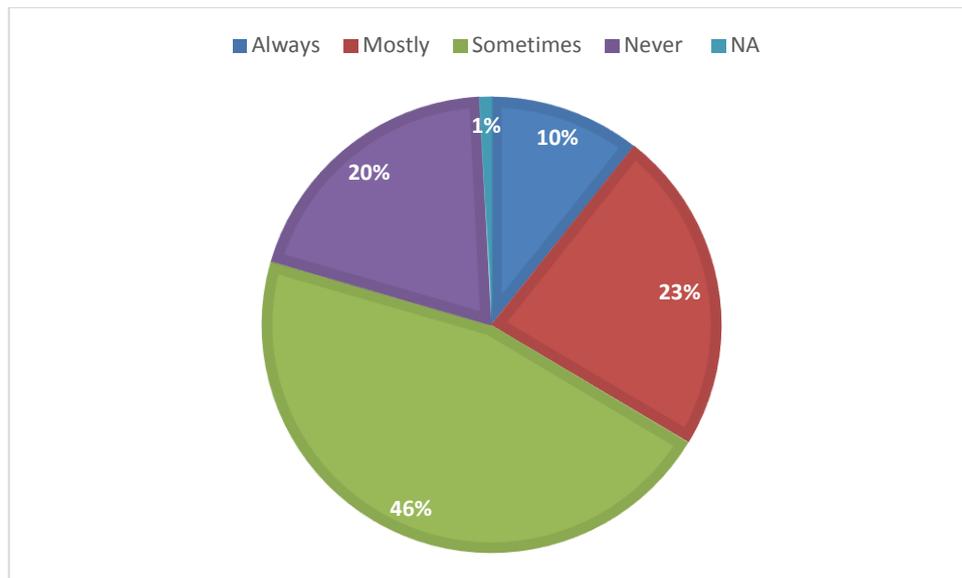
64% of carers reported feeling like part of the team only sometimes or never, with 35% of carers feeling like they were either always or mostly treated as part of the team.

Carers were asked whether they feel as though their views are heard.



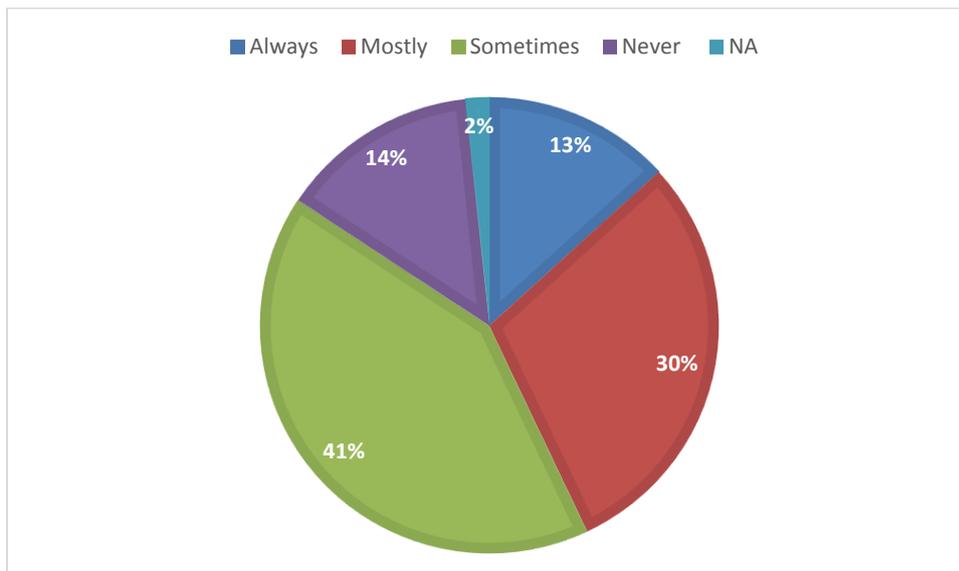
Only 28% of carers reported feeling that they feel their views are either always or mostly considered. This leaves the majority of carers who were surveyed in Central Region stating that they feel that their views are only heard sometimes or never.

Carers were asked whether they feel as though there is consideration given to their whole Foster or Kinship family.



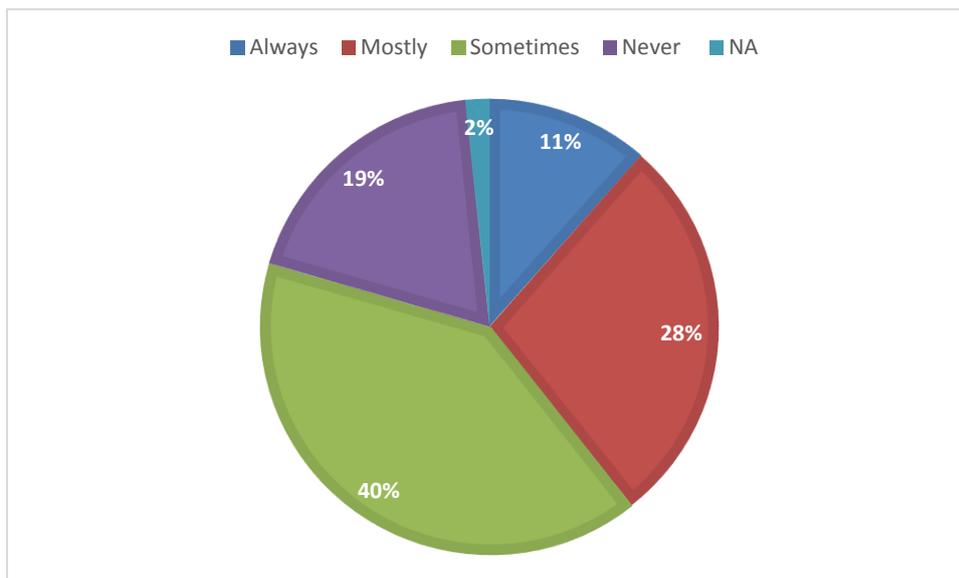
It is concerning that 66% of carers reported that they felt as though there is only sometimes or never any consideration given to the whole of family. Families are more likely to leave the fostering system when they see their whole of family being effected negatively and given little consideration.

Carers were asked whether Child Safety is responsive to your calls and emails.



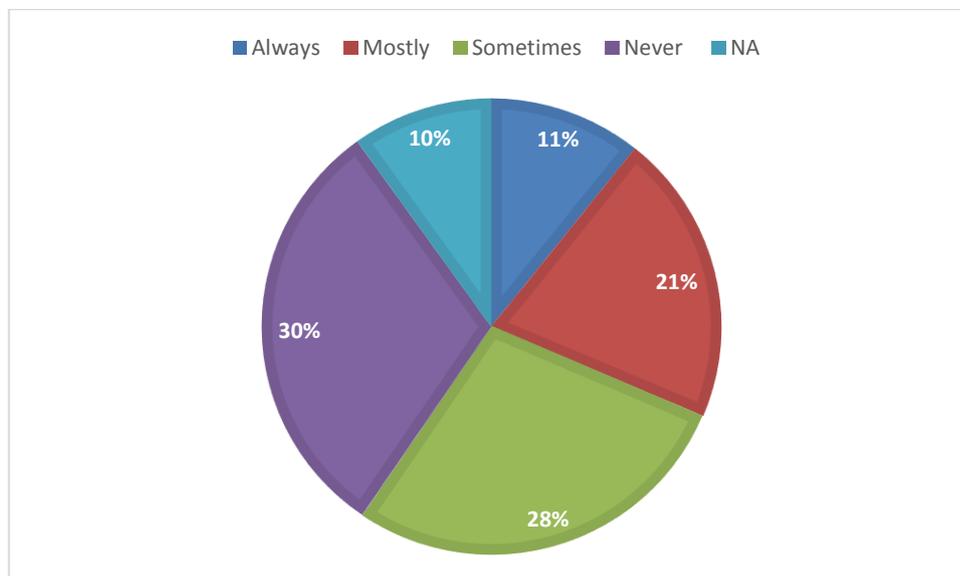
43% of carers reported that their CSSC was responsive to emails and phone calls always or mostly, 55% reported only sometimes or never and 2% marked N/A

Carers were asked if the CSSC creates a supportive environment.



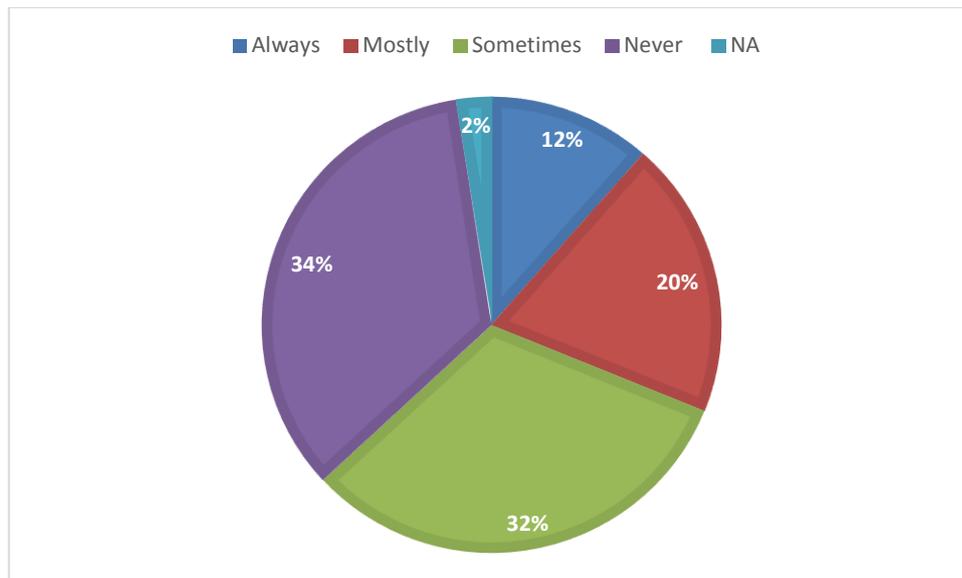
39% of carers reported their CSSC creates a supportive environment and 59% reported only sometimes or never.

Carers were asked if they are assisted in completing applications for reimbursements/claims in a timely manner.



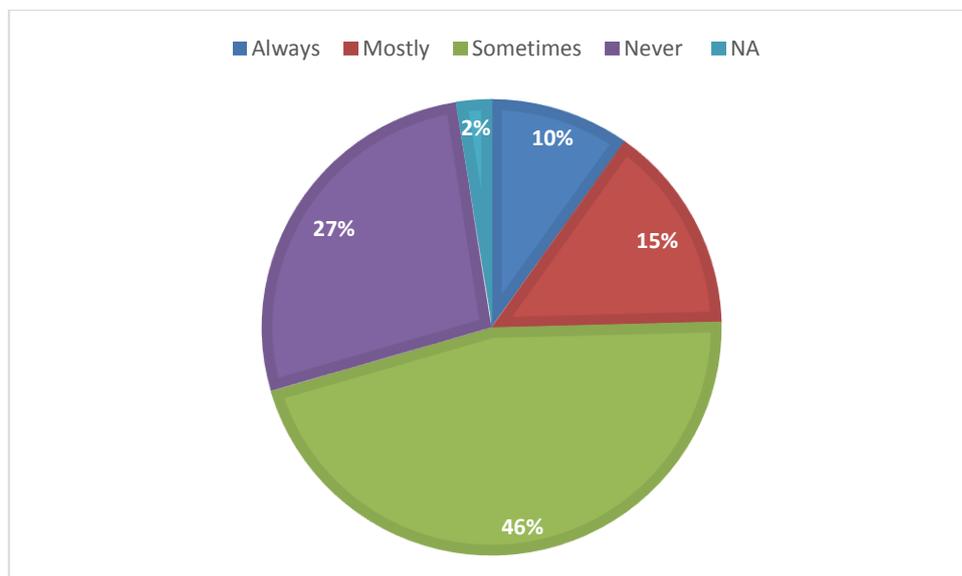
58% of carers reported that they feel that the CSSC only sometimes or never assists in this area. As stated in 2016 Carer Survey, Financial stress can very much impact on placement stability and is often overlooked as a stress factor in Foster and Kinship families despite financial stress being one of the most recognised sources of stress in normal everyday families.

Carers were asked whether their CSOs let them know when they are going on leave or are going to be unavailable.



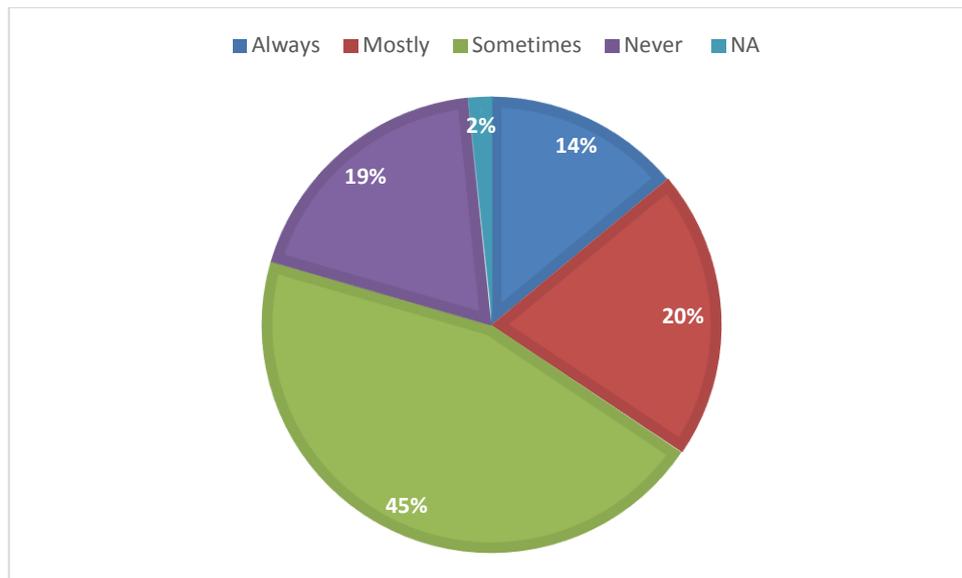
Advising the care team when planned leave or unavailability is occurring is a basic communication requirement in order to build a respectful and supportive care team, 31% of carers reported that they are either always told or mostly told when this occurs leaving a large proportion of carers in the dark during these times. It must be noted however that this figure represents an improvement from the 2016 Survey for Central region where only 25% of carers reported either always or mostly being told. This is a positive step.

Carers were asked whether they are given ongoing information about the child in their care.



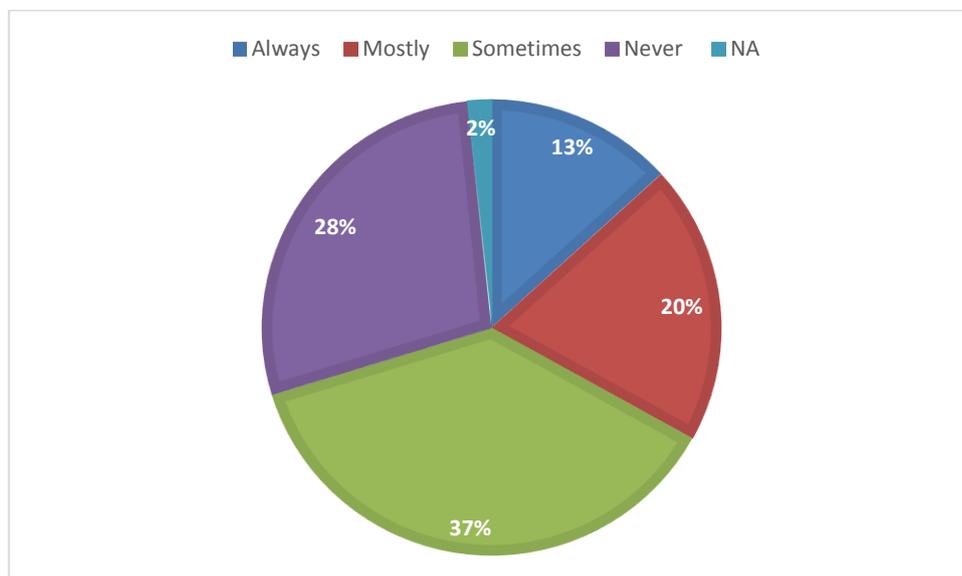
73% of carers reported that they only sometimes or never get updated information about children in their care, this represents little change from the 2016 survey where it sat at 74%. Sharing of information is critical in the ongoing stability of placements, it enables carers to be prepared for possible triggers, assist in learning and support plans for carers to meet the emerging needs of the children in their care and allows for care team members to work collaboratively together in the best interests of the children as everyone as the same information that informs decision making.

Carers were asked whether support and assistance was provided to them by CSSC for the children in their care.



Unfortunately 64% of carers who responded felt that support and assistance for children in their care was only provided sometimes or never provided.

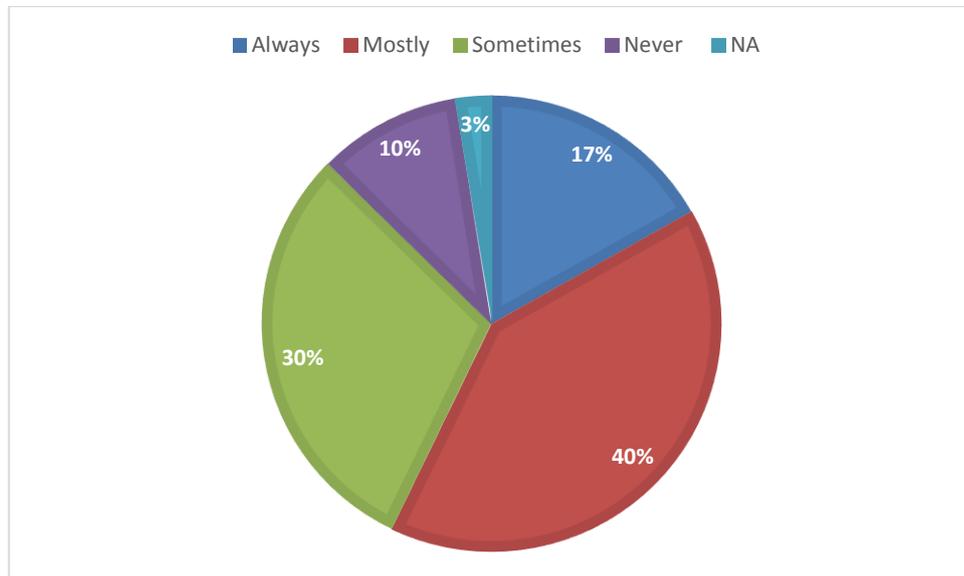
Carers were asked whether they were respected to advocate on behalf of the children in their care for resources, goods and services.



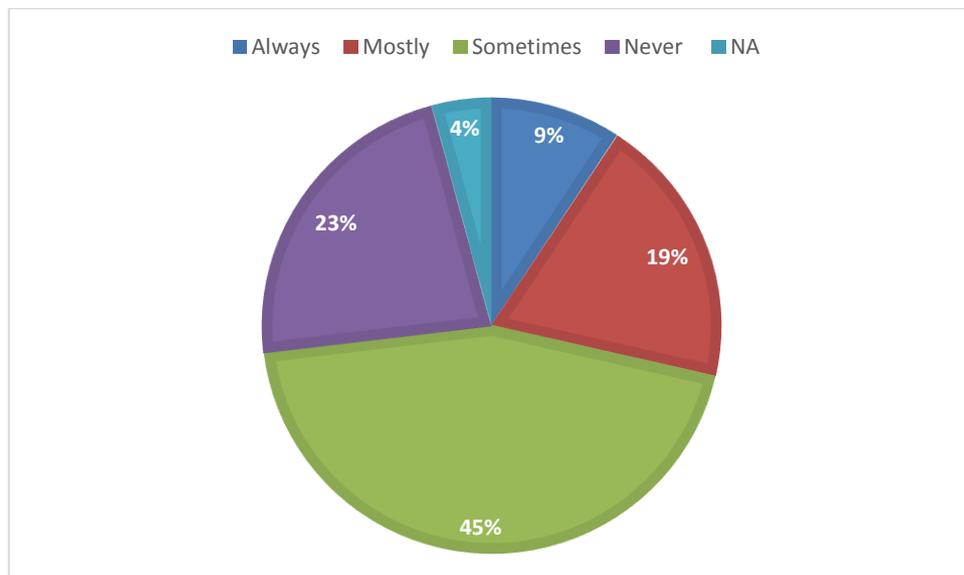
33% of carers reported feeling they felt supported to advocate for the child always or mostly and 65% reported feeling they were not respected to advocate for the child sometimes or never. Advocacy for children and young people is a required skill for carers that is explored within their initial fostering assessment. Whilst members of the Safety and Support network may not always form the same view, all should have their views heard and respected.

Child Safety Processes

Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with the approval and reapproval processes as carers.

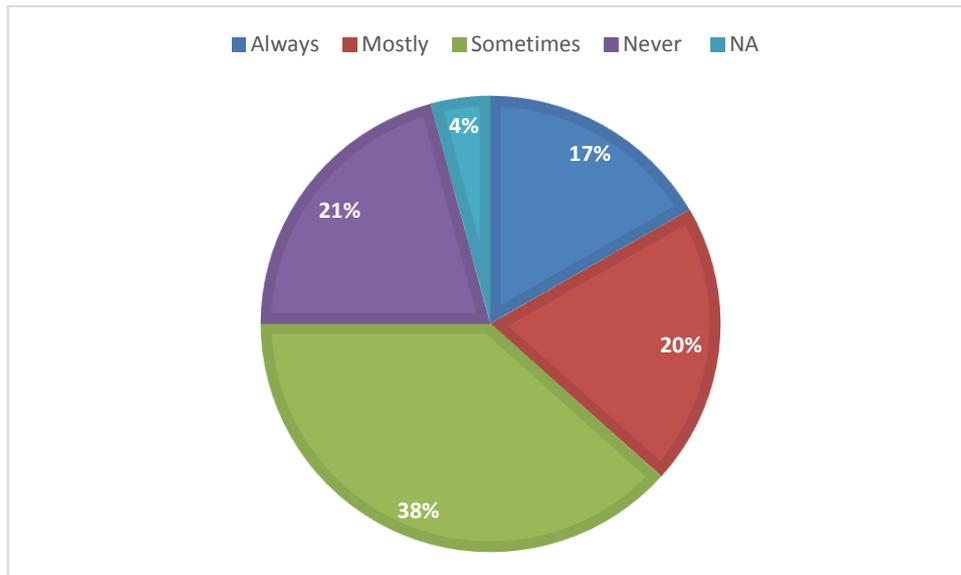


Carers were asked if they were satisfied with the completion of Placement Agreements.



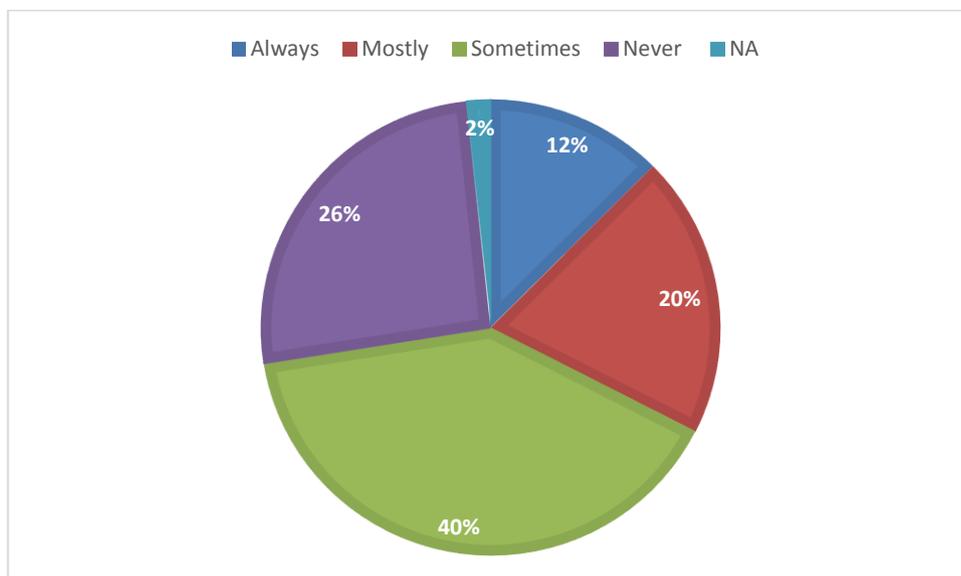
Given that Placement Agreements are a legislative requirement it is concerning that only 28% of carers reported feeling always or mostly satisfied in this area.

Carers were asked if they were satisfied with home visits being completed by Child Safety.



59% of reported feeling only sometimes or never satisfied with home visits being completed by Child Safety Officer. Further exploration would need to occur to identify if this is related to the frequency or quality of the home visits.

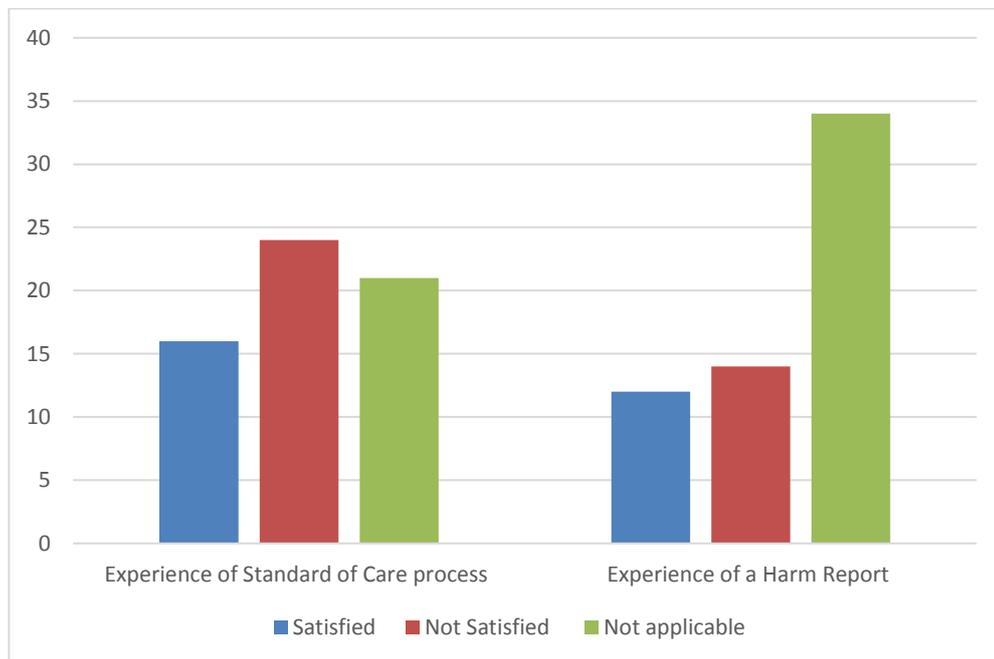
Carers were asked if they feel satisfied with their ability to engage in case planning for children in your care.



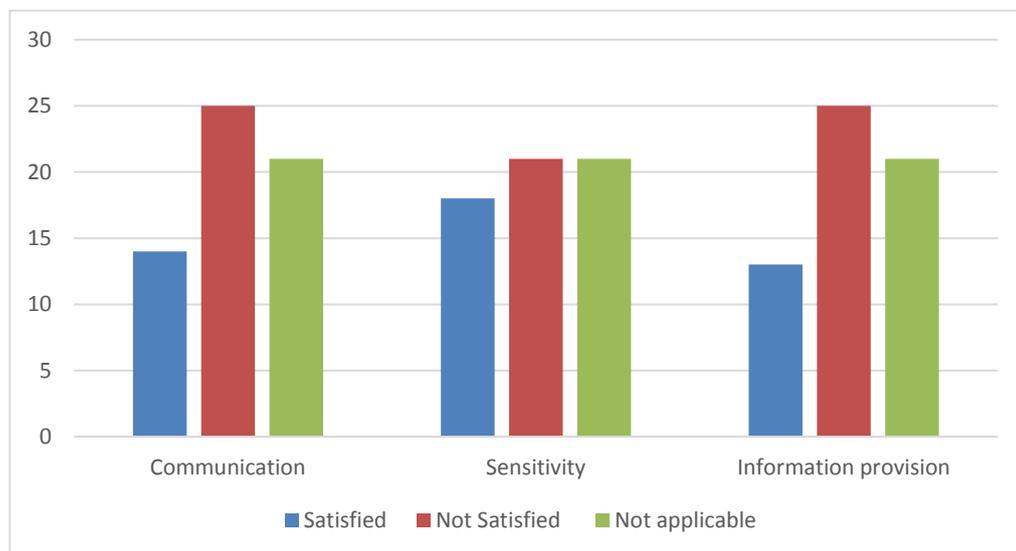
66% of carers reported feeling satisfied only sometimes or never with their ability to engage in for children in their care.

Standard of Care/Harm Processes

Carers were asked whether they were satisfied in respect to Standard of Care and Harm processes they had been through.



Carers were asked a range of questions around the process relating to the quality of communication, sensitivity and information provision.

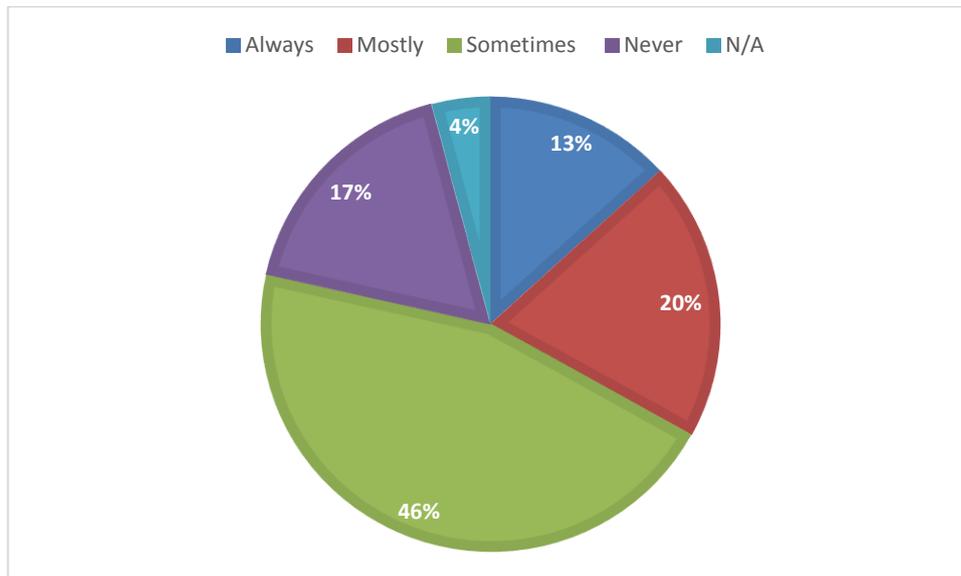


Carers were then asked if they were satisfied with the timeliness of the outcomes 46 % reported feeling unsatisfied with the timeliness of the process and 19% reported feeling satisfied with the remaining percentage stating it was not applicable.

Carers were then asked if they were satisfied with the review process that took place if they were not happy with the outcome of the Standard of Care and/or Harm report, of those who thought this question was applicable to them 68% reported not feeling satisfied with the review process.

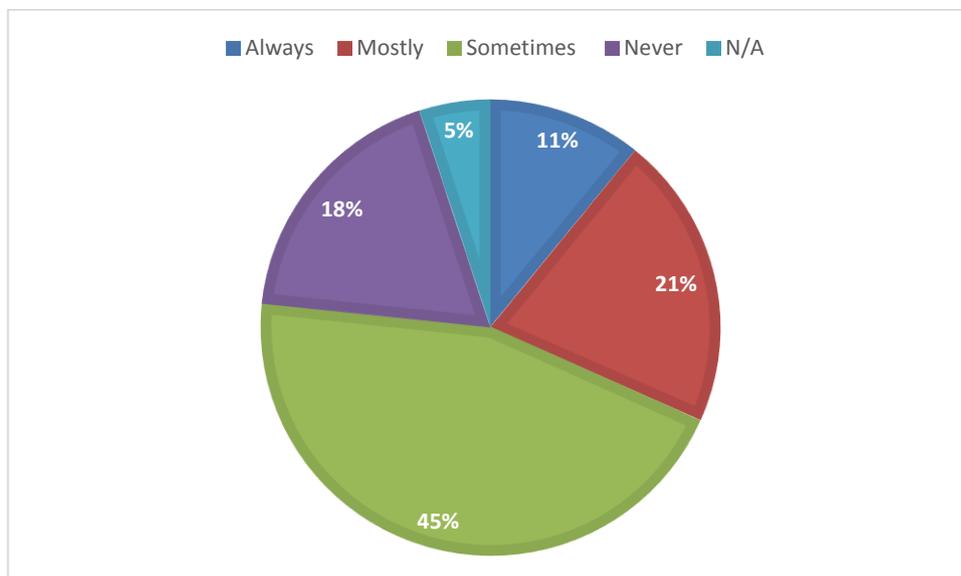
Confidentiality

Carers were asked if they were satisfied with information provision provided to them about the children in their care.



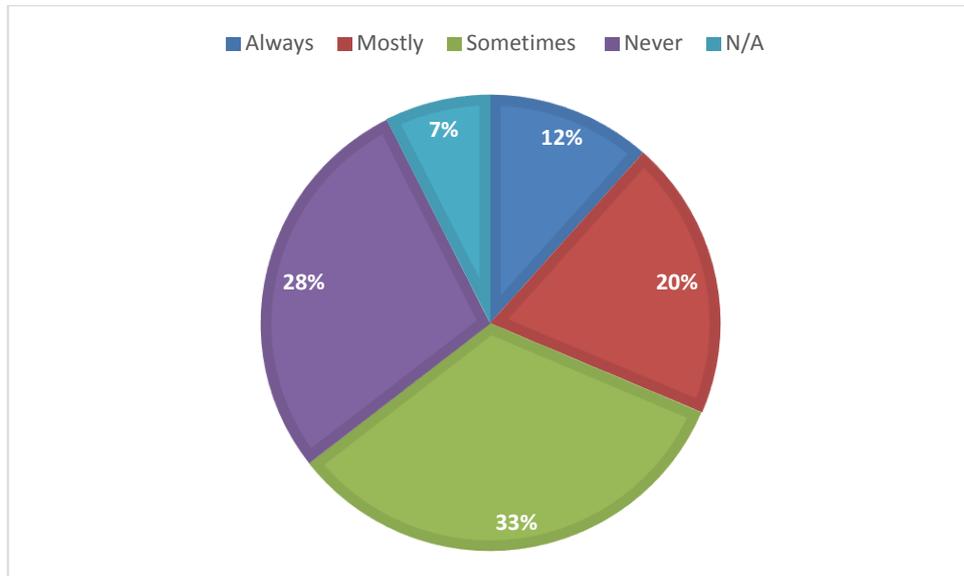
62% of carers reported they are only satisfied sometimes or never.

Carers were then asked if they were satisfied that information was provided to them about the child as it became available to Child Safety.

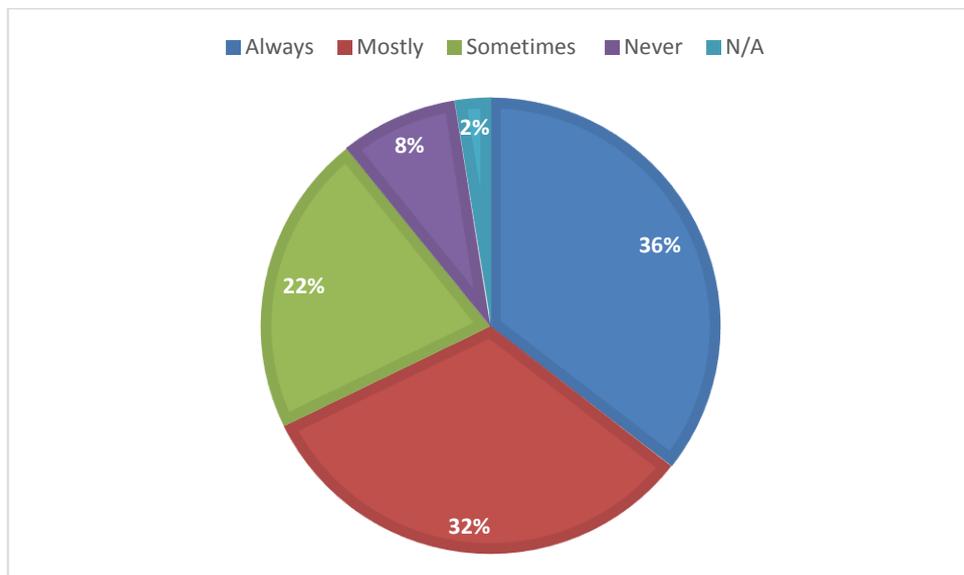


63% of carers felt satisfied sometimes or never that information was passed onto them when it became available.

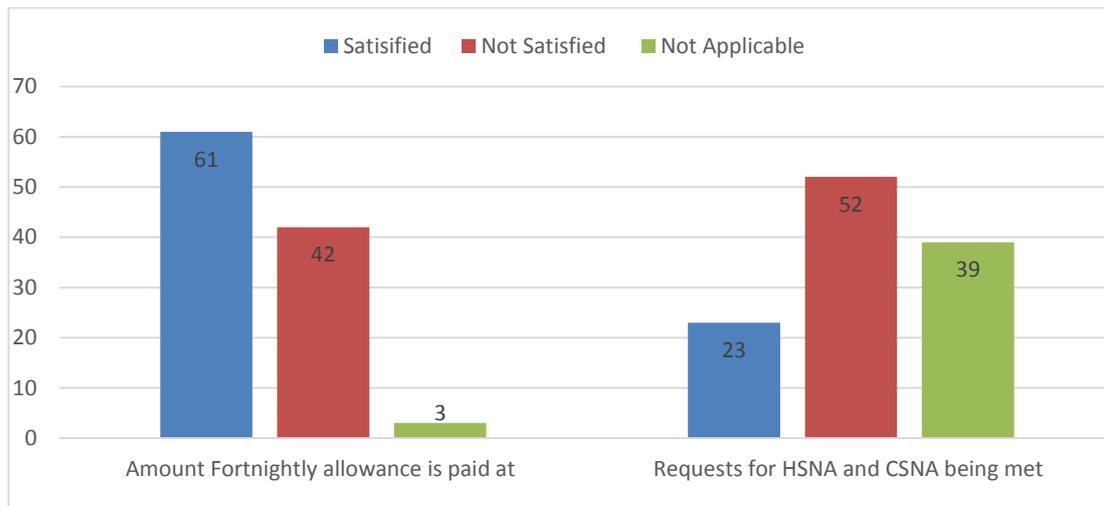
Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with the information provided to them in respect to the Safety checks being completed prior to identifying information being given out.



Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with their understanding of confidentiality provisions and how this relates to them as carers.



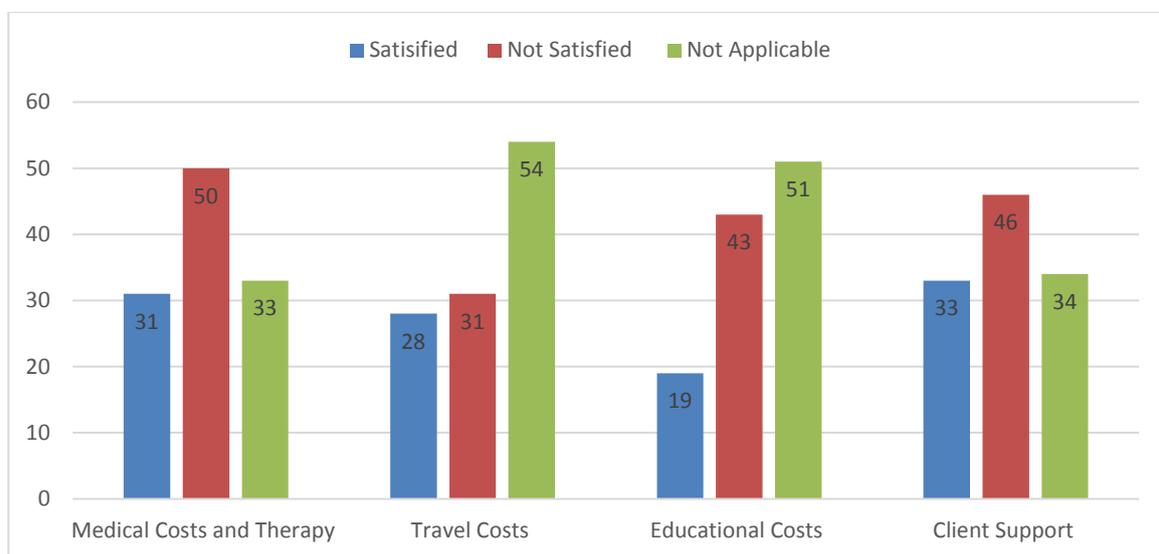
Financial



61% of carers reported feeling satisfied with the amount at which the fostering allowance is paid at, although lower than last financial year, this is above the State average for the 2018 survey.

Of those carers who felt that the question relating to requests for HSNA and CSNA was applicable, 52% reported not feeling satisfied with their requests being met in this area, this is a decrease of 3% in dissatisfaction from the 2016 survey.

Carers were asked about a number of Child Related Costs that sit outside of the fostering allowance and whether they felt satisfied in relation to the payment of them.



On 2nd July 2018, children in care across Australia became eligible for the Australian Child Care Subsidy at Risk through the Department of Education and Training. This was a significant accomplishment for Child Protection systems right across Australia. In order to access, carers must be informed and have access to the appropriate documentation through Child Safety. FCQ asked carers in the survey whether they were satisfied with their provision of required documents to access the free child care through the Australian Child Care Subsidy for children in care. Only 73 carers answered this question (this may be an indication of lack of understanding) of those who answered 61% reported feeling not satisfied.

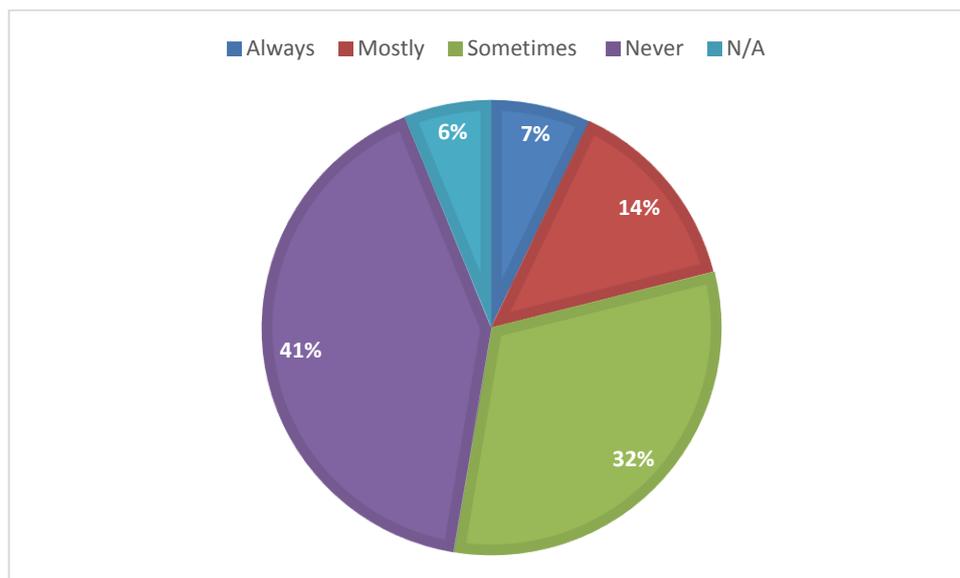
This is an area that requires a lot of education through the sector to help not only carers understand the changes, but also Department staff and Fostering and Kinship Care staff.

Carers were asked about their knowledge to apply for ex-gratia (special payments) and whether they were encouraged to apply for these when applicable. 15% of carers reported having knowledge and being encouraged to apply for special payments. 59% reported not feeling satisfied in this area with the remaining feeling the question was not applicable to them.

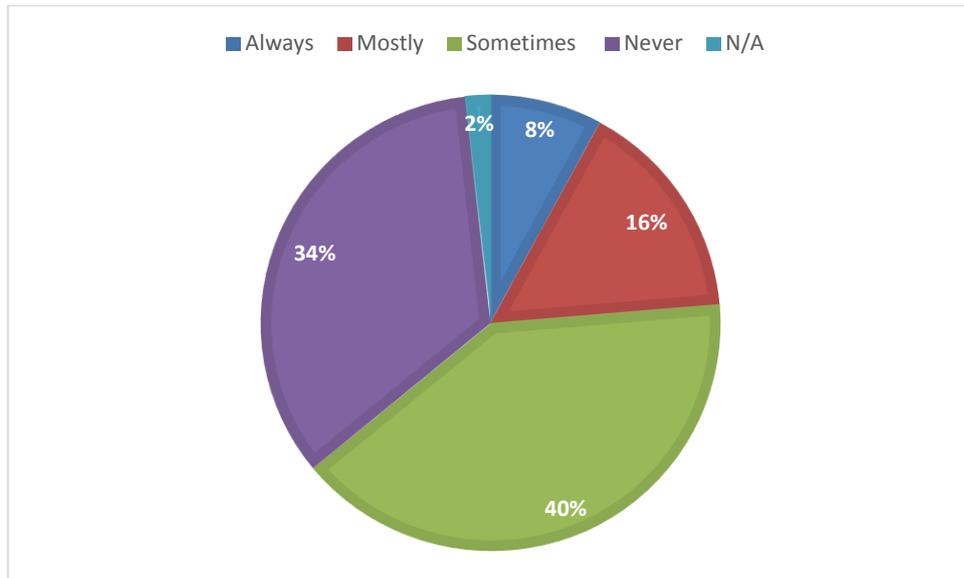
Finally carers were asked if they were satisfied about information provision relating to Child Related costs. 32% of carers reported they did not feel satisfied in this area, 60% reported feeling satisfied and 9% reported that this question was not applicable to them. There was a significant increase in satisfaction rates in this area with the 2016 report only reporting a satisfaction of 26% which is very positive to see.

How satisfied are you with local practices of CSSC

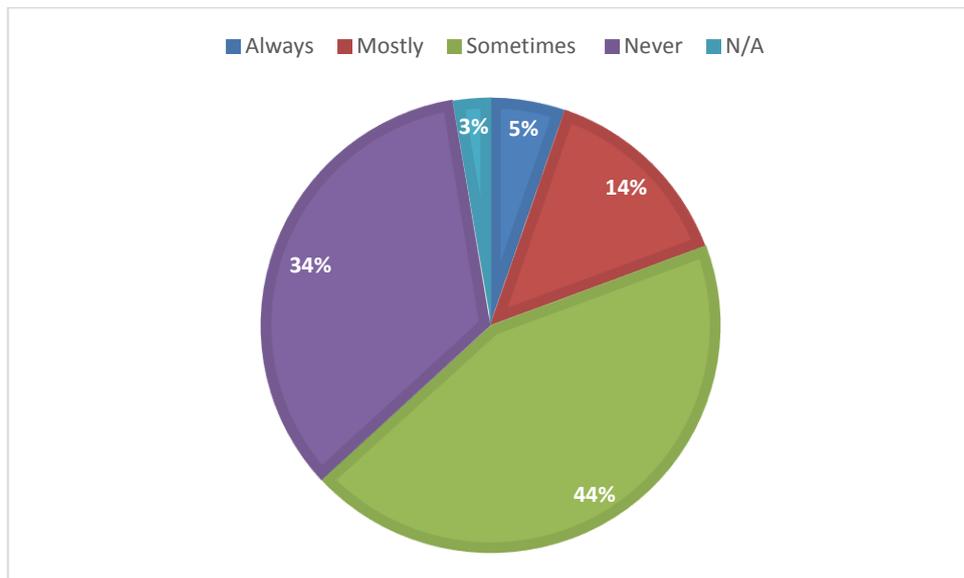
Carers were asked how satisfied they were regarding information in relation to changeover CSO.



Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with the knowledge of history regarding the child/ren in their care.

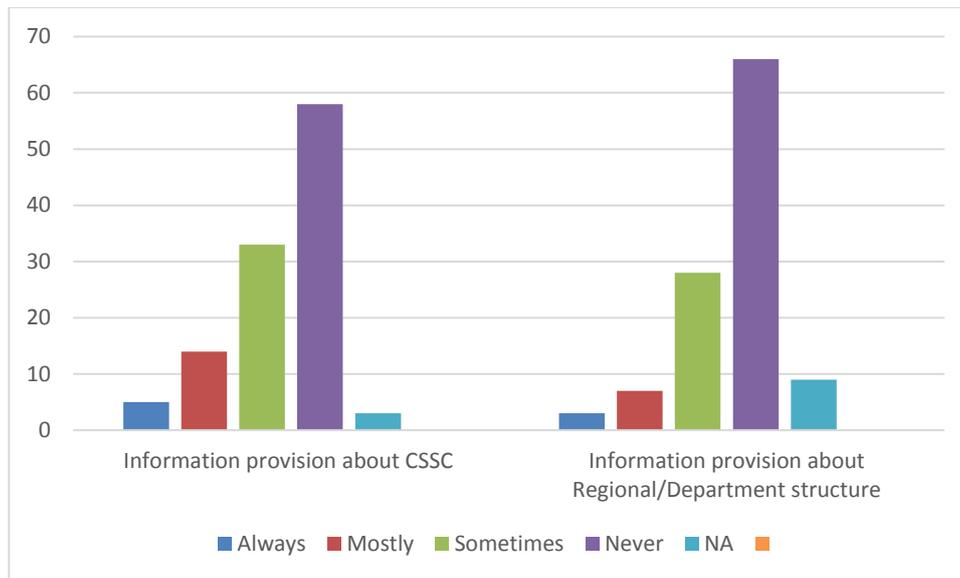


Carers were asked if they were satisfied with the timeliness and provision of Case Plans.



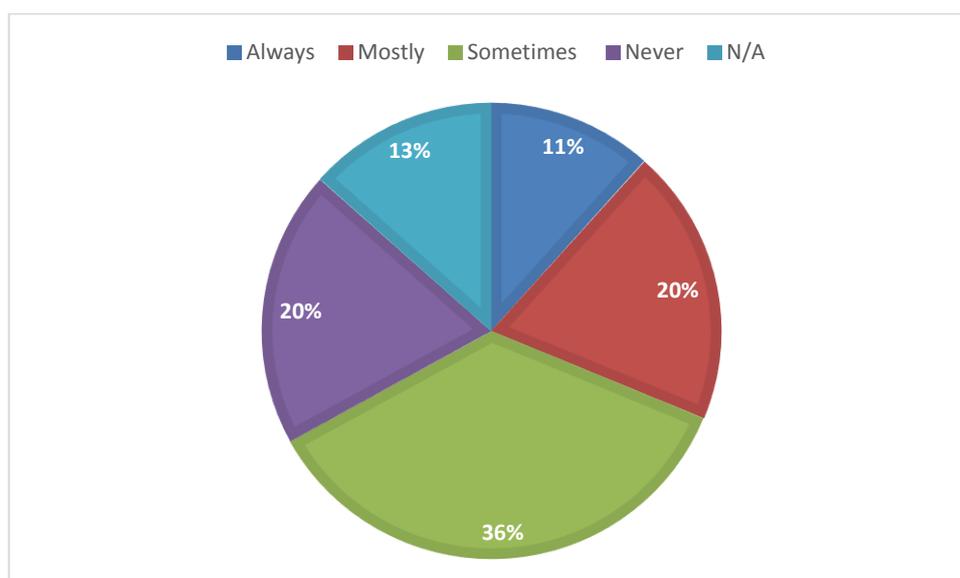
Only 19% of carers reported that they were always satisfied or mostly satisfied in this area, leaving 78% of carers in Central Region feeling that Case Plans were only done in a timely manner some of the time or never.

Carers were asked if they were satisfied about provision of information provided by the CSSC and Region.

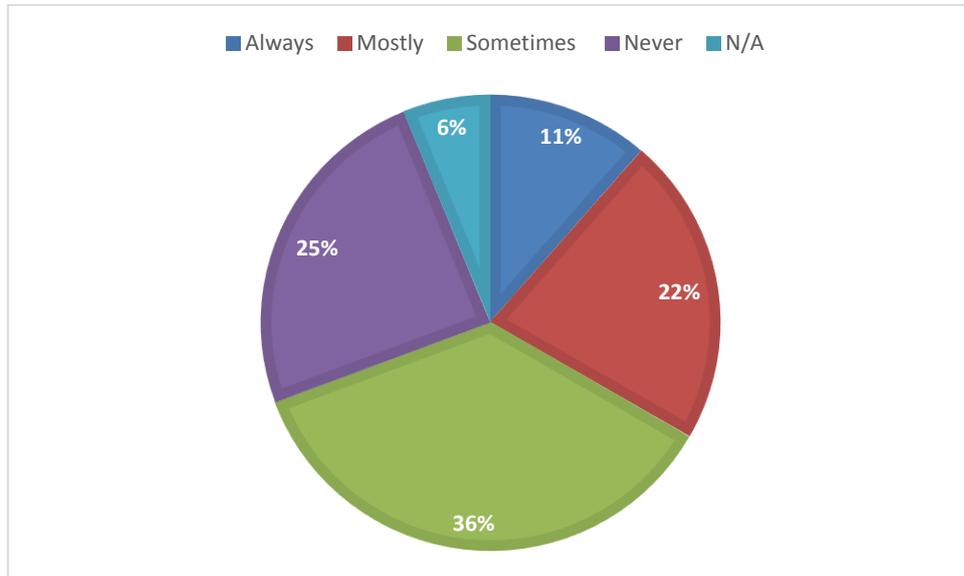


As demonstrated in above graph, carers expressed overwhelmingly that they are not kept up to date about changes in either their CSSC or Region. Whilst the Sector may think that through the use of email, all carers will be kept updated, it must be acknowledged that all carers are individuals and should be communicated with in a way that meets their needs. For some this will be via email, for some this will be via phone or sometimes face to face. It is hoped that in two years' time, this area will be vastly improved with the introduction of the new Carer Connect App and through carers becoming more familiar with the newly introduced carer website. FCQ acknowledges Child Safety's efforts to improve this area from the previous survey through Partners in Care and subsequent recommendations.

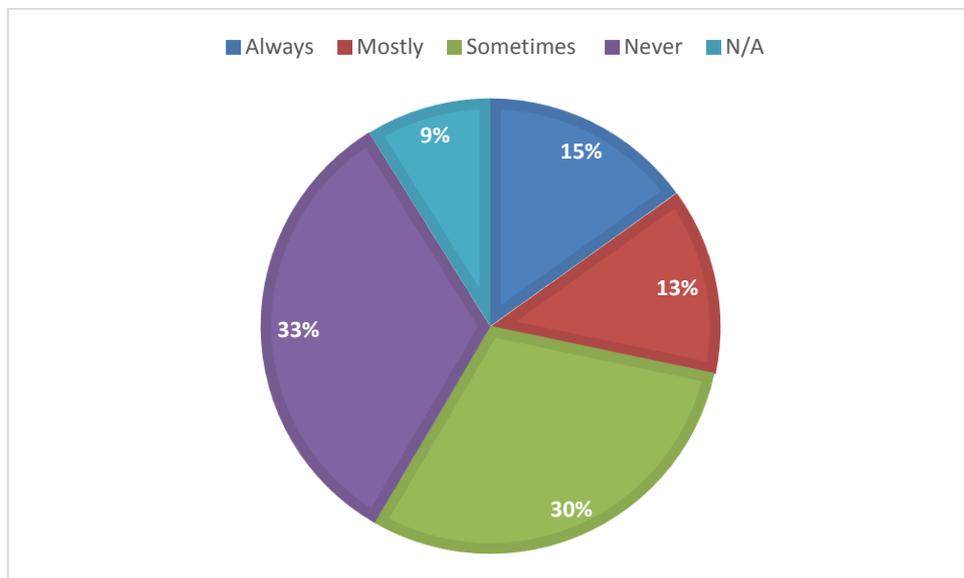
Carers were asked if they were satisfied with their ability to access respite.



Carers were asked whether they were satisfied in respect to being consulted regarding Family Contact.



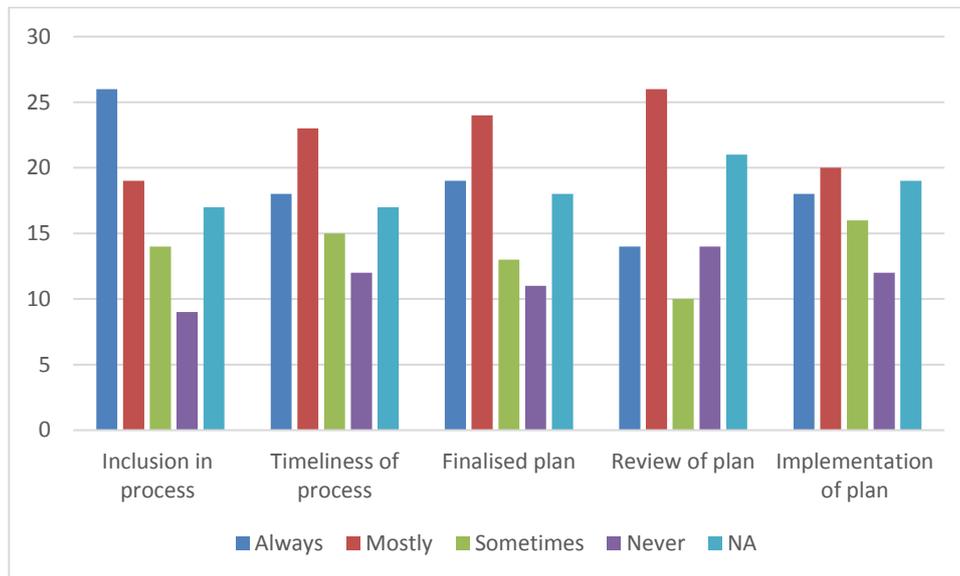
Carers were asked whether they felt they were supported to meet their own family commitments.



Education Support Plans

Carers were asked if they had a current ESP plan in place for the child/ren in their care, 64% reported having an ESP plan.

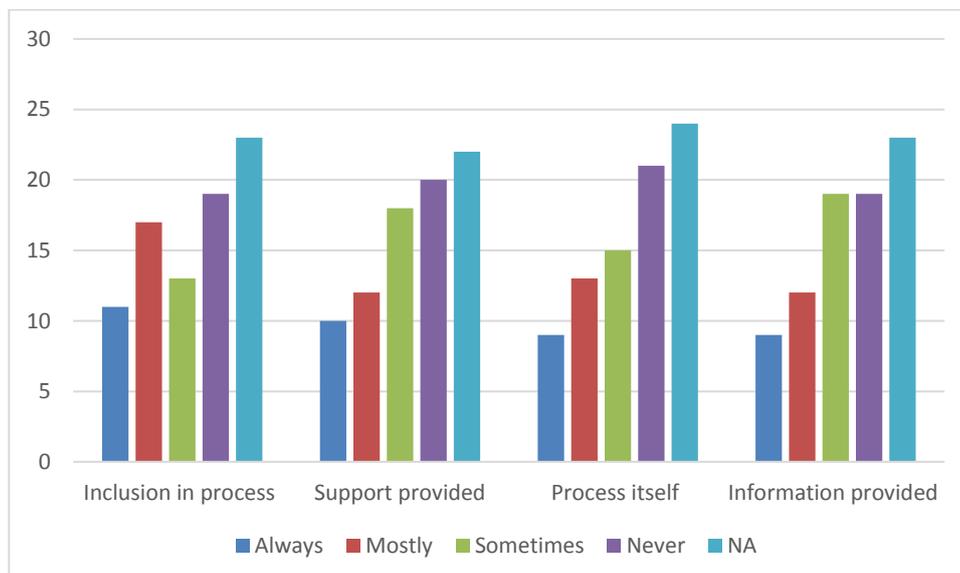
Carers were then asked a range of questions relating to the ESP process and their satisfaction with this as follows.



Child Health Passports

Carers were asked if the child/ren in their care had a current Child Health Passport, Only 44% of carers reported having a Child Health Passport in the Central Region.

Carers were then asked a range of questions relating to the processes of Child Health Passports and how satisfied they were, carers reported as follows.

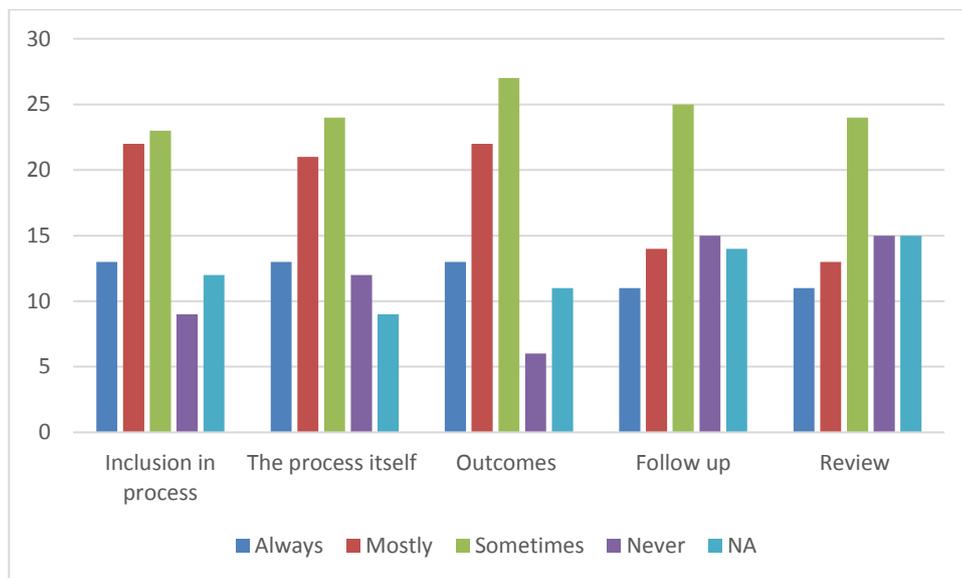


Carers reported high levels of dissatisfaction in respect to a number of processes relating to Child Health Passports, but most notably with support and the process itself. It is hoped that the Strengthening Health Framework will provide a much higher degree of service delivery to children in care that is meaningful.

Placement Agreements

Carers were asked if they had a current Placement Agreement generated from a placement meeting, 54% stated they do (52% reported they did in 2016 survey).

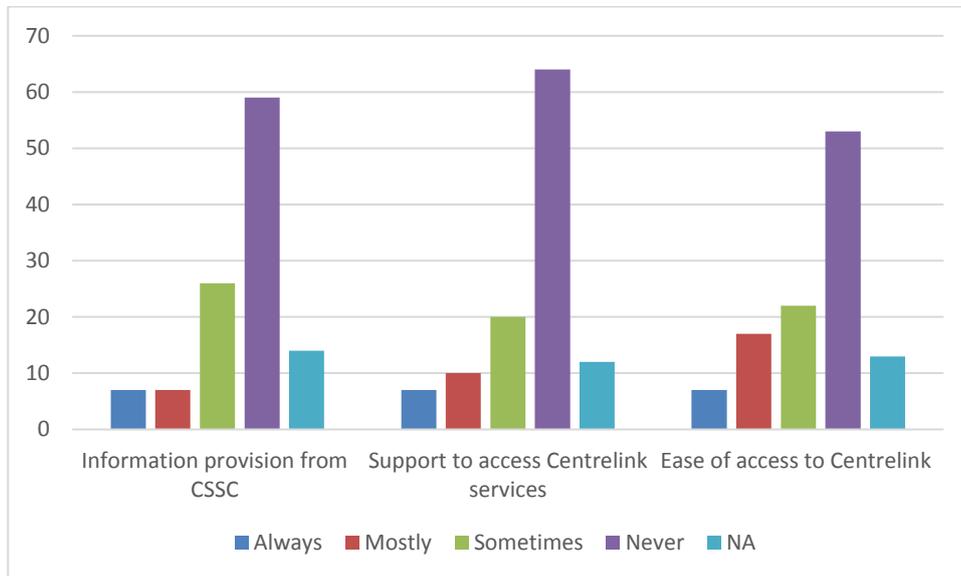
Carers were asked a range of questions relating to their satisfaction around the processes of Placement Agreements with the following responses.



Carers were then asked whether they received a copy of the placement meeting minutes, unfortunately an overwhelming amount of carers reported they did not at 84%.

Centrelink

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to Centrelink and how they were supported to access services through Centrelink from the CSSC, responses were as follows.

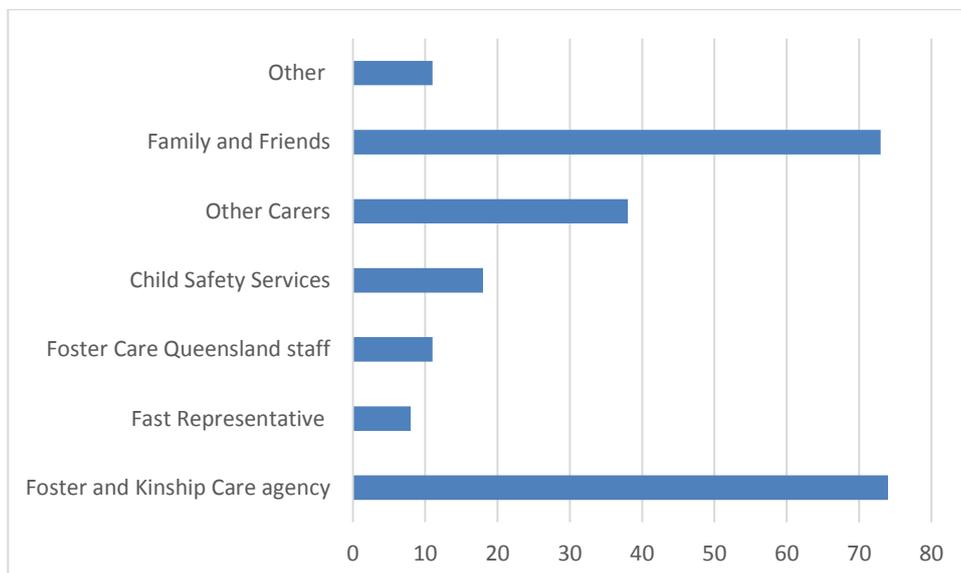


It is evident through this data that carers are feeling a high level of dissatisfaction in this area with the majority of carers feeling that they never receive information or support from their CSSC in relation to how and what they can access from Centrelink.

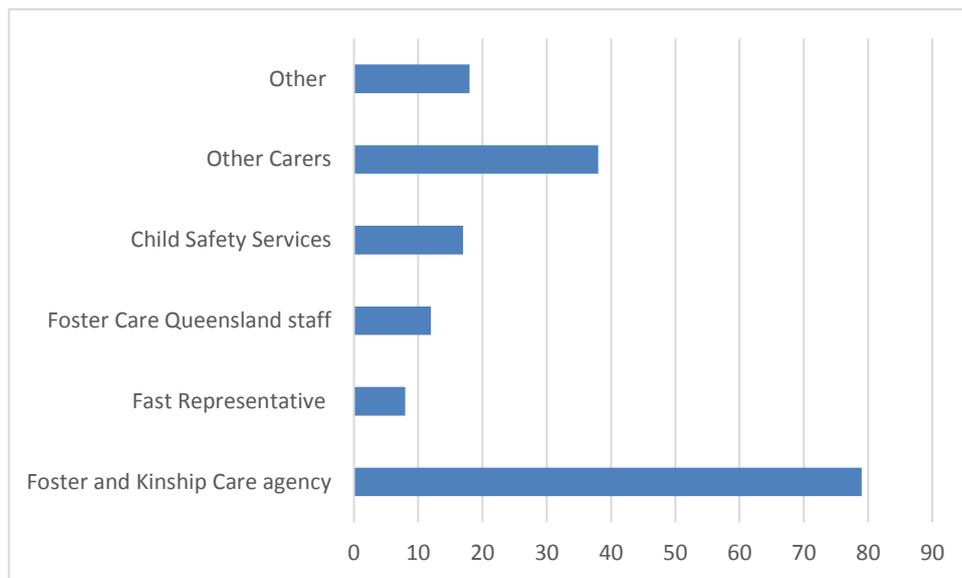
Carers were then asked a question relating to ease of access to Medicare Cards for the children in their care and Health Care Cards. 63% of carers reported only sometimes or never feeling satisfied with the timeframes associated with accessing Medicare Cards. 58% of carers reported feeling only sometimes or never satisfied with time frames associated with accessing Health Care Cards.

Support

Carers were asked where they accessed the majority of their support from, carers were able to tick more than one box.



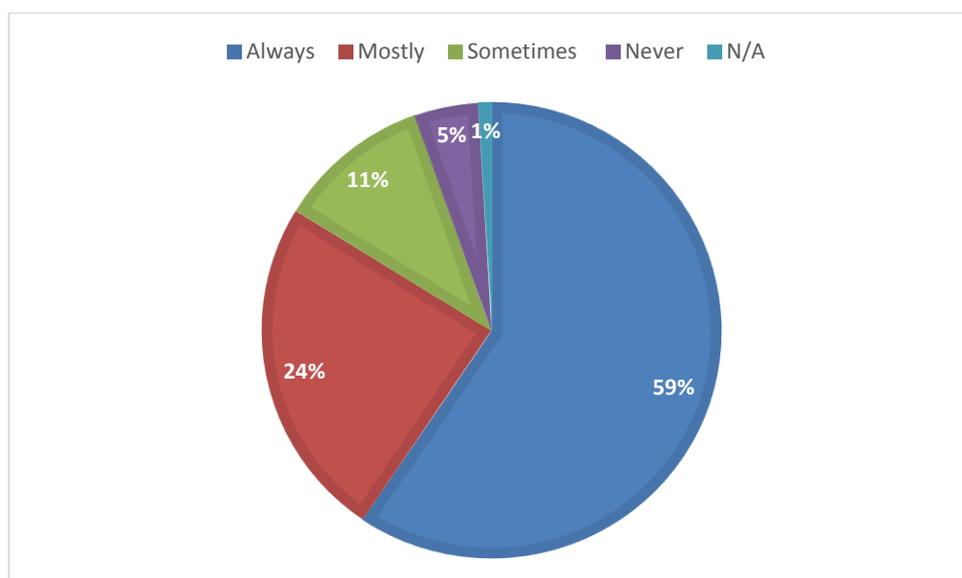
Carers were asked where they access the majority of their information from as carers.



Foster and Kinship Care Services

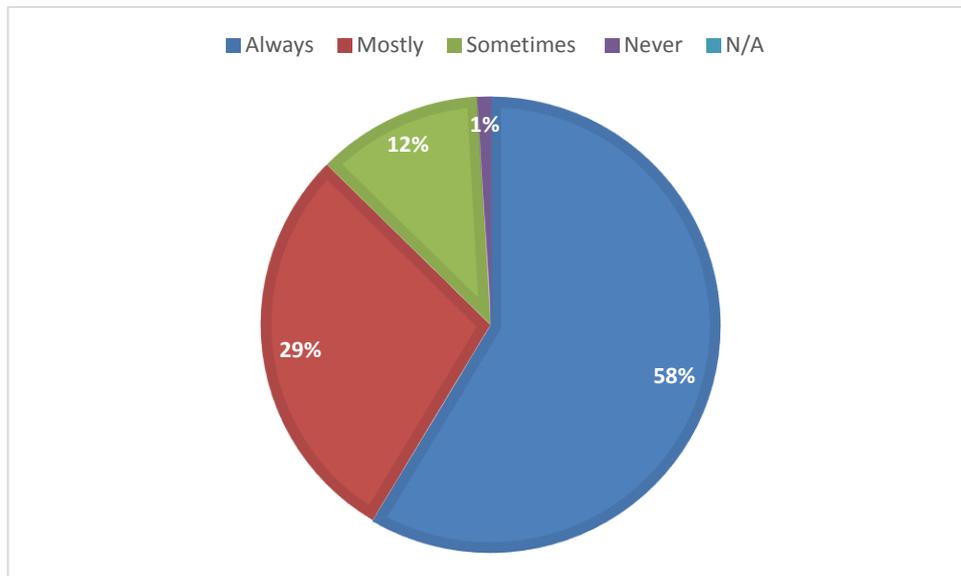
Carers were asked a range of questions relating to the support provided by Fostering and Kinship Care agencies. Firstly carers were asked if they were attached to a Fostering and Kinship Care Agency, only 5 carers in Central Region who completed the survey identified that they were not with a fostering and kinship care agency.

Carers were asked if they were satisfied in respect to regular support visits occurring (at least monthly).

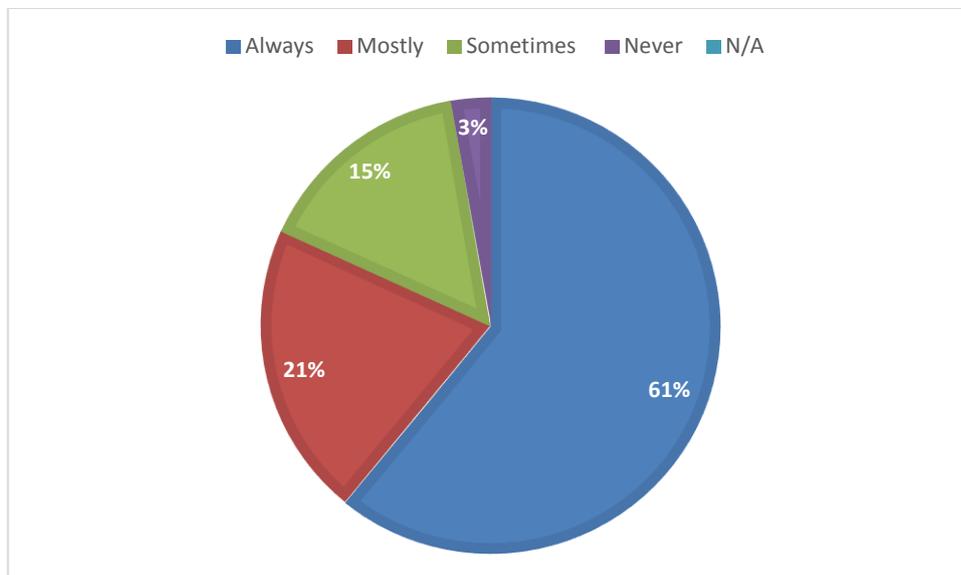


It is very positive to see that 83% of carers reported always or mostly always feeling satisfied with the regular support visits occurring with only 5% of carers identifying they are never satisfied in this area.

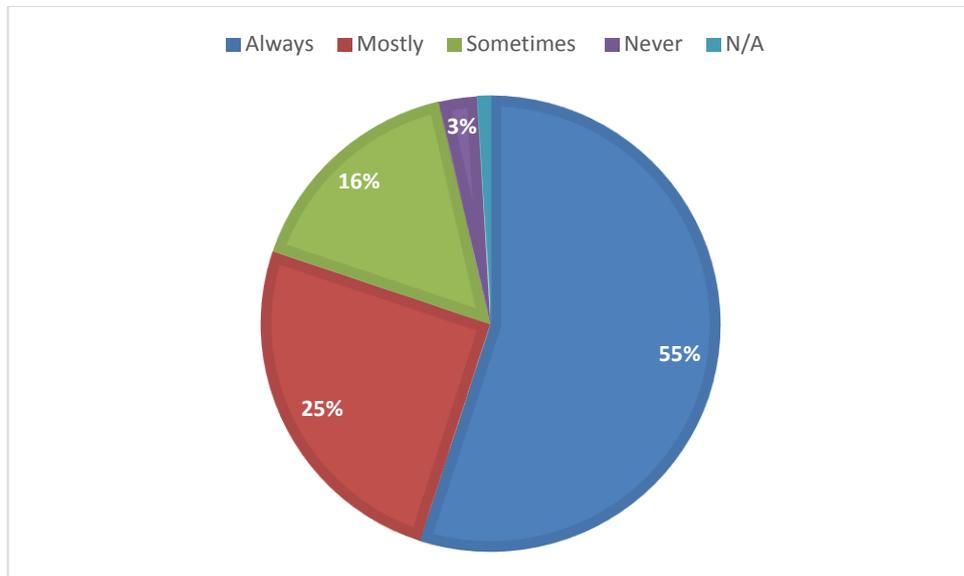
Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with response to contact with their agency.



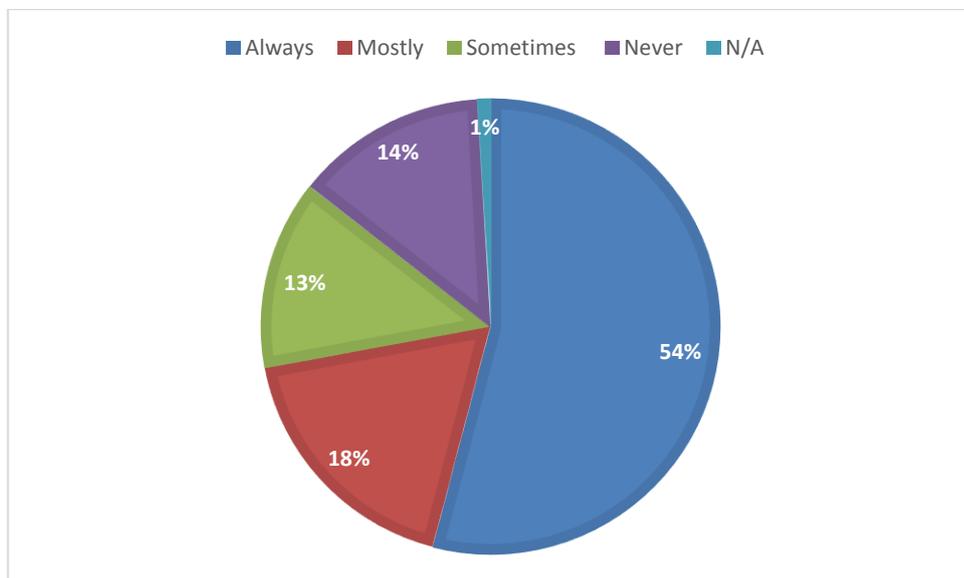
Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with assistance provided by their agency to complete paperwork.



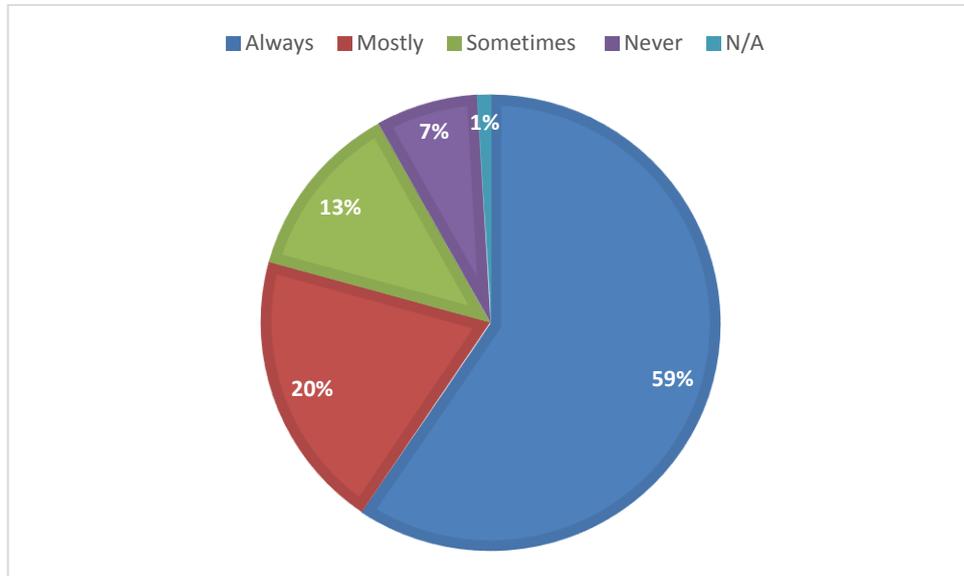
Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with their workers knowledge of current policy and procedure.



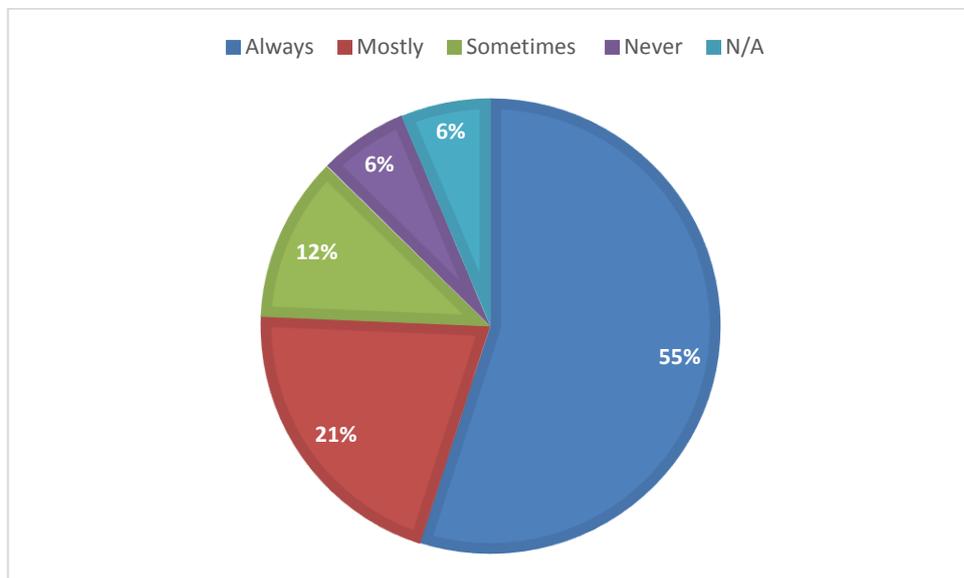
Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with their access to support networks through their agency.



Carers were asked if they were satisfied with their access to training.



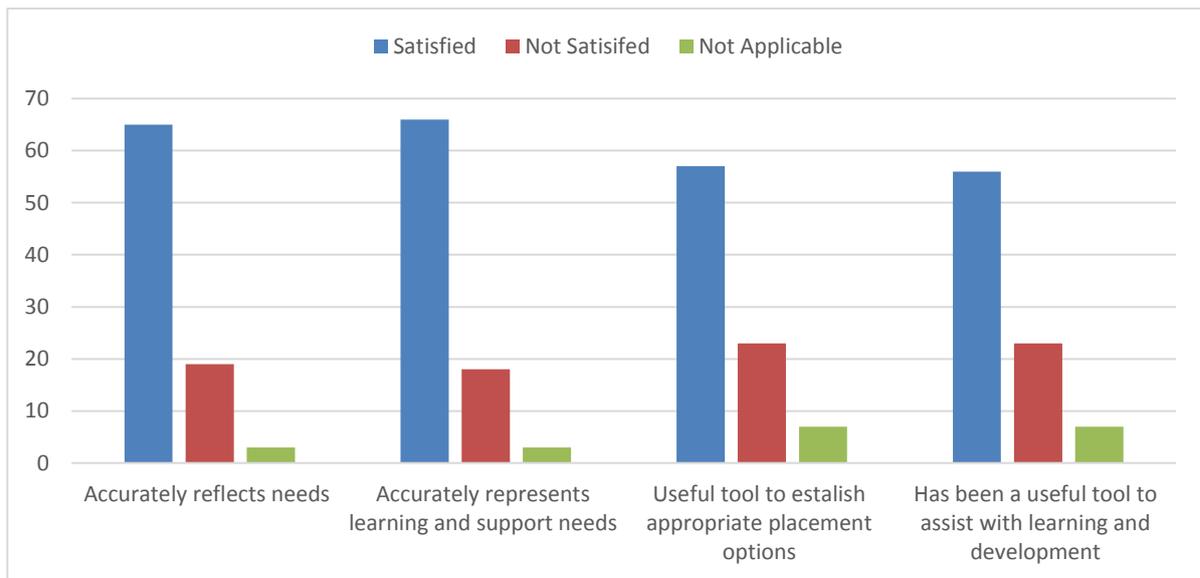
Carers were asked if they were satisfied with the on call service provided by their agency.



Foster Care Agreements

Carers were asked if they had a current foster care agreement, 75% reported they have one, 18% reported they did not and 7% reported they did not know what one was. Given that Kinship carers do not have to have a foster care agreement, it is probable that those who reported not having one or not knowing what one was are in fact kinship carers.

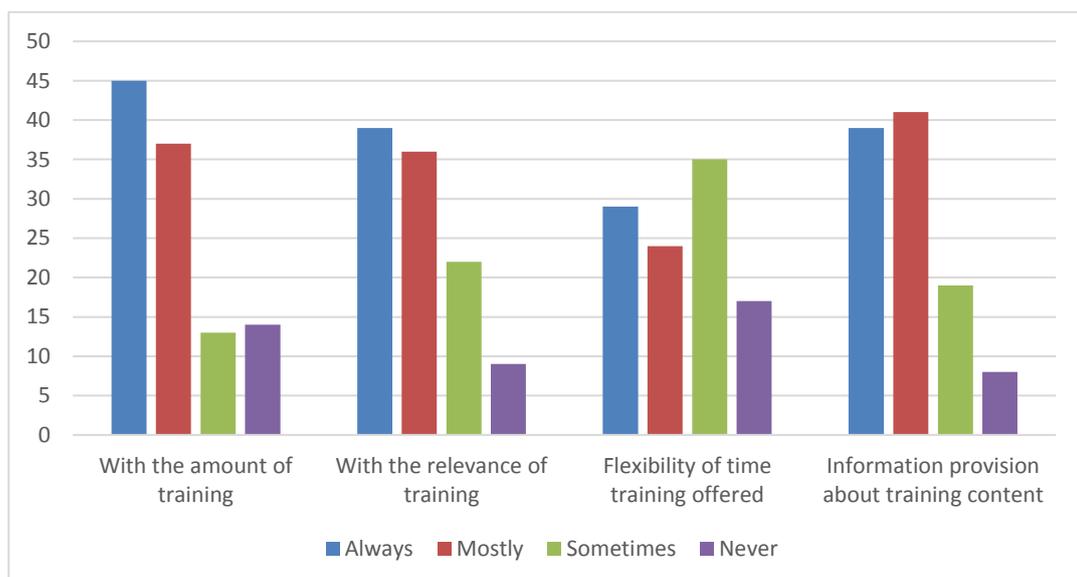
Carers were then asked a range of questions relating to the usefulness of the Foster Care Agreement as follows.



Carers have reported high levels of satisfaction across the board in relation to the Foster Care Agreement.

Training

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to their training experiences as follows.



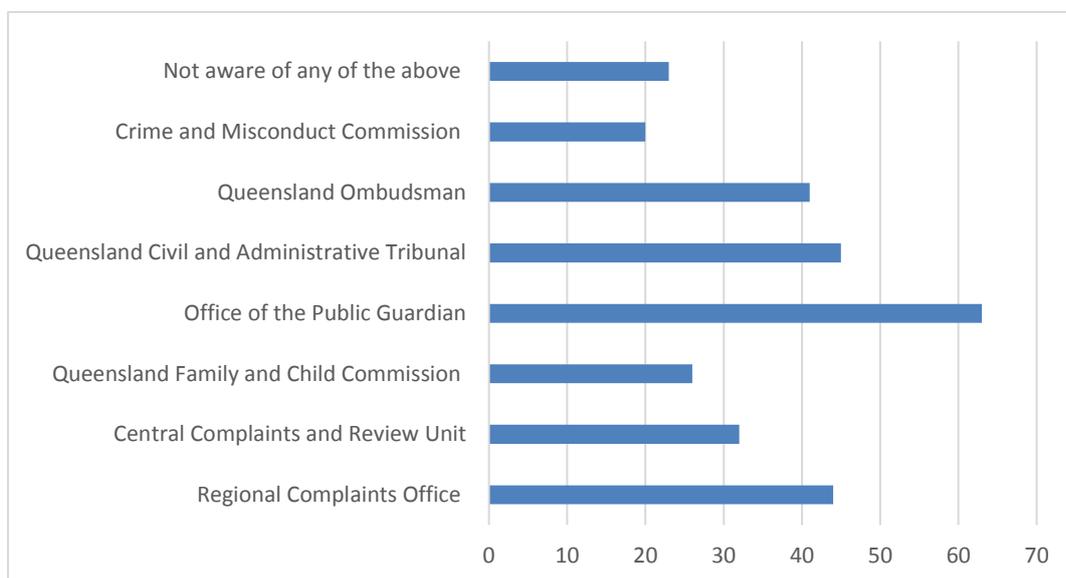
- 75% of carers reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with the amount of training offered.
- 70% of carers reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with the relevance of the training offered.

- 49% of carers reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with the time of day/night the training is offered.
- 71% of carers reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with the timeframes they were notified about the training.
- 88% of carers reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with the information provided about training content.

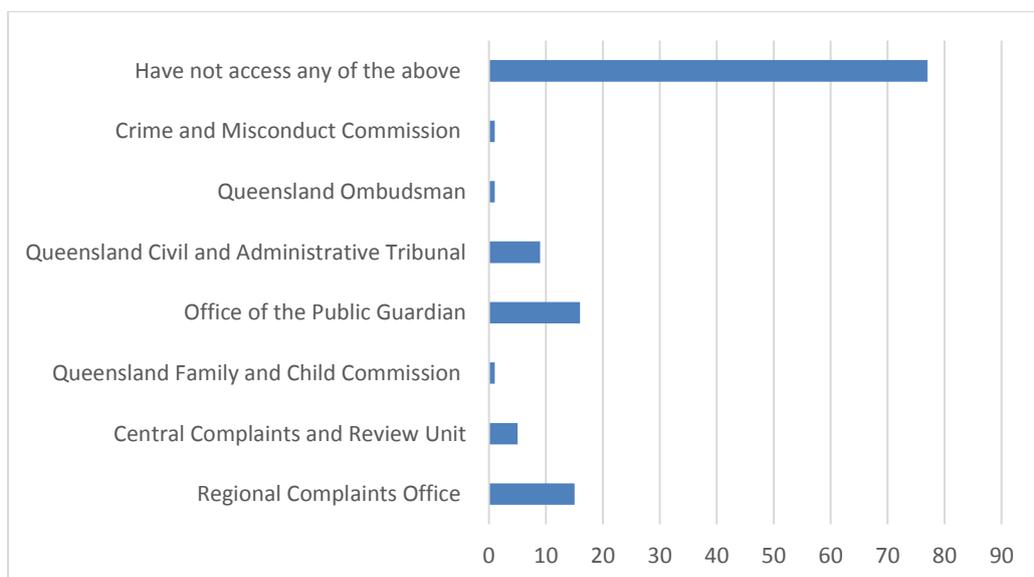
Carers were also asked whether they were satisfied with provisions of or support to access child care during training. 53% of carers reported they were only sometimes or never satisfied with this area.

Complaint/Concerns Processes

Carers were asked to identify which complaint/appeal processes they were aware of.



Carers were then asked if they had accessed any of the above processes.

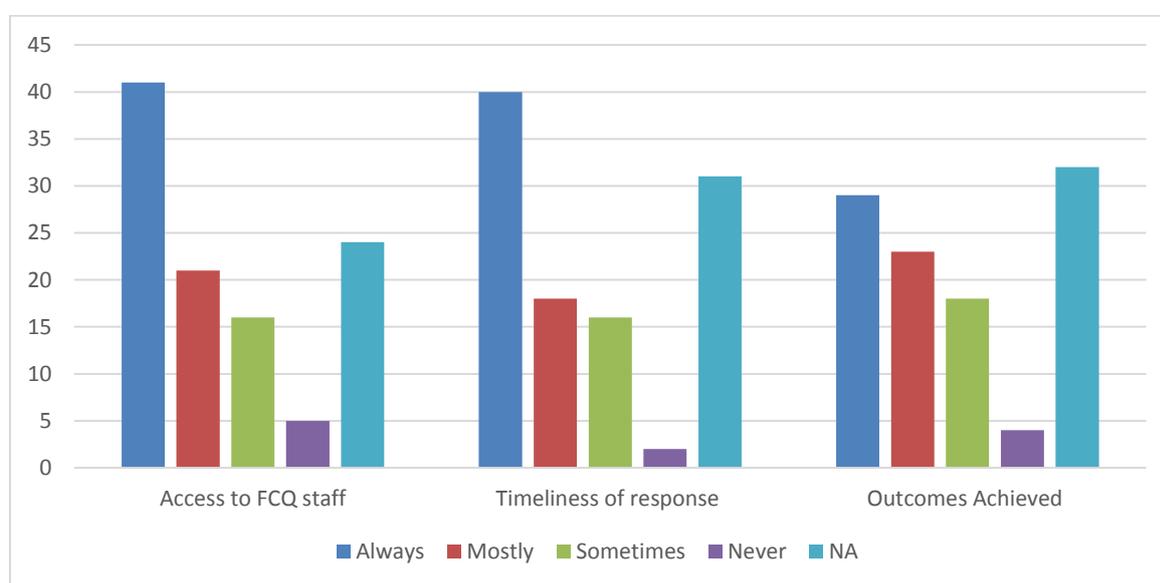


Carers were asked if they felt heard and were satisfied with the outcome regarding their contact with the above services. 56% of carers reported they felt heard (up from 28.5% in 2016) and 38% of carers felt satisfied with the outcome achieved (up from 22% in 2016).

Foster Care Queensland

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to Foster Care Queensland (FCQ). Firstly carers were asked if they were satisfied in respect to information provision regarding FCQ, 69% of carers reported satisfaction. In respect to knowledge and understanding of services provided 65% of carers reported feeling satisfied.

Carers were then asked a range of questions relating to their experiences if they had contact with FCQ, please note that carers who have put not applicable, have not been included in this data as it is not relevant.



- 78% of carers who felt question was relevant to them reported feeling either always or mostly satisfied with access to staff.
- 76% of carers who felt question was relevant to them reported feeling satisfied with timeliness of responses.
- 71% of carers who felt question was relevant to them reported feeling satisfied either mostly or always with outcomes achieved.

FAST Program

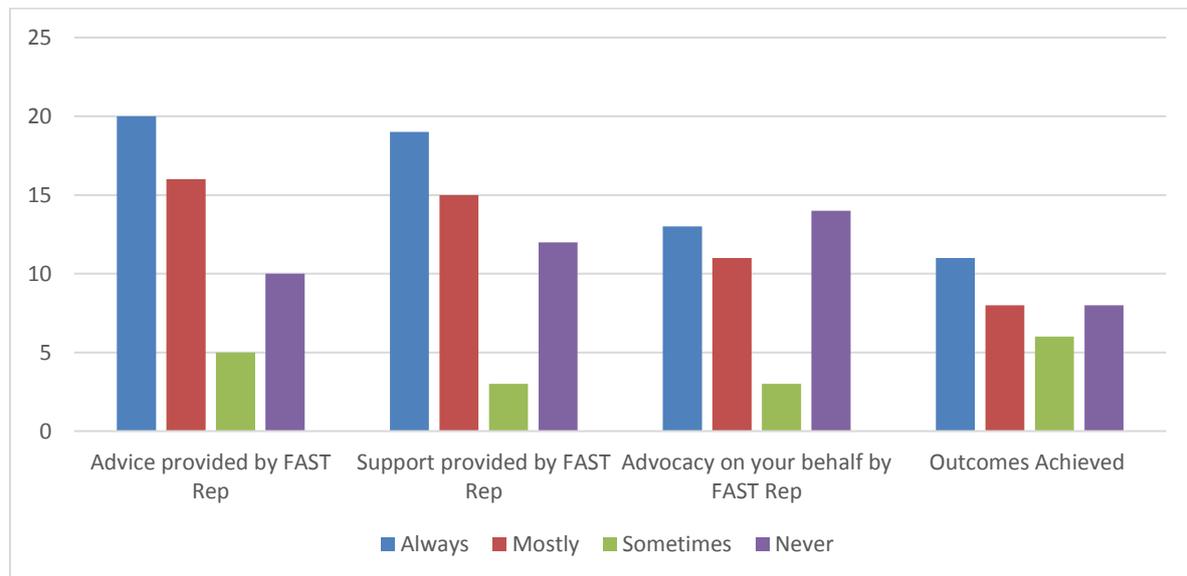
Carers were asked a range of questions relating to the FAST program attached to FCQ.

Carers were asked if they were satisfied with provision of information about FAST. Of those carers who felt the question was applicable to them 67% reported feeling satisfied. In terms of knowledge of local FAST Representative, of those who felt the question was applicable to them 63% reported feeling satisfied.

Carers were then asked if they felt supported to access their local FAST Representative from Child Safety and from their Fostering and Kinship Care Service. Of those that thought the question as relevant to

them 32% of carers reported feeling satisfied with support to access their FAST Representative from Child Safety and 60% reported feeling satisfied with support to access their FAST Representative from their Fostering and Kinship Care Service.

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to their experiences of accessing a FAST Representative – please note only those carers who felt this question was relevant to them has been included in this data.



- 70% reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with advice provided by their FAST Representative.
- 69% reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with support provided by their FAST Representative.
- 58 % reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with advocacy on behalf of carer with Child Safety.
- 58% reported feeling always or mostly satisfied with outcomes achieved.

Partners in Care

FCQ included a section in this year’s survey on Partners in Care, the following results were received:

- 17 of the carers who completed the survey from Central Region attend a Partners in Care Workshop.
- 25 of the carers who completed the survey reported they have seen/received communication about Partners in Care.
- 18 of the carers who completed the survey reported noticing a positive difference since Partners in Care.
- 64 of the carers who completed the survey reported they would participate in future forums similar to the Partners in Care Workshops (please note 69 skipped this question and 17 said no they would not).

Looking Forward

During this section of the report, carers were asked a range of questions relating to their future as carers and what they would like to see change.

Firstly carers were asked how long they intended on continuing to provide care for 84% of carers reported they intended on caring for more than 3 years. 11% stated they only intended on caring for another year and the remaining 5% stated they intend on caring for another two years.

Carers were then asked if there was support that would influence that decision – 48% of carers stated that the support they received would influence this decision. The following comments were provided:

1. *Our local Child Safety Department - if it continues to be so bad we could be out of here.*
2. *Lack of support. Being patronized, judged, belittled, and spoken poorly by an agency or dept worker.*
3. *Having my own child.*
4. *My kinship child has extreme self-harm behaviours and therefore I am deemed as not being suitable to provide care to other children.*
5. *Agencies need to support their workers so that they don't change as often as the kids change underwear! You need to have someone you can contact when things go rough and when everyone is always changing there is no trusted person to call. Getting help from someone who doesn't know you, or the kids or your situation is impossible. We need to have access to support when requested.*
6. *The ability to be offered children who are a good fit for our family and fit our carer agreement requests. We do understand that all children in care have trauma and may be challenging but we need to know that each child offered to us isn't already identified as one for the intensive fostering service because of their high level of need. We have teenage bio children and these foster children certainly affect our own in an often negative way.*
7. *Decisions made from Child Safety that are not in the best interest of the child, lack of communication from Child Safety about matters concerning the child.*
8. *Min 1 yr....Child Safety not always forthcoming or honest about reunification datesagreements often broken...help if they were more transparent...I understand there is quite a turnover of staff and their positions are overloaded, e.g. my child in care rarely sees the CSO...if I asked him her name he wouldn't know.*
9. *Yes there is a little boy with us that we are prepared to keep until he is of age as we don't want to see him destroyed by the Department like they have done to his brother.*
10. *We don't feel our offer to care for kids is properly advocated for. We've been Fostering for a year and keep getting told that kids in our age group are hard to get when numerous other foster carers have multiple children in our age group as emergency offers.*
11. *Some current workers and Manager deliberately make life extremely difficult, false accusations, incorrectly written up reports, lack of consultation, inconvenience with last minute changes to contact, not turning up to scheduled meetings...*
12. *I haven't received any support from either Child Safety office for 10 months now, I am not connected to a fostering agency. Luckily I work in a fostering office so usually organise my own information.*
13. *If current child is removed from our care to reunify with family, would no longer continue as carer's. This decision is not meant in a threatening tone, we would both struggle with the emotional loss and wouldn't put ourselves in that position again.*

14. *Yes it'll be nice that if the office in {location de-identified} will show some respect to us Carers instead of thumbing us off.*
15. *My age and health without relevant support will determine how long I can care for 3 high needs kids.*
16. *{CSSC de-identified} are hopeless they turn blind eyes to serve themselves, the children aren't there first priority.*
17. *Yes, support for school fees, bus fares, school uniforms, medical costs, travel costs/fuel costs being reviewed. What is allocated does not meet the costs of rural remote areas. Because that is where I live in a small rural remote community, I do not live in {location de-identified}, I have to travel back and forwards to {location de-identified} to shop/school/Doctors and activities etc., and the current fuel costs are horrendous, and I do not have the funds for this to continue to happen nor do I have the funds to re-locate.*
18. *We have no support. Wages paid to people that cannot do a good job. All agencies involved have made me feel like dirt. Not worthy.*
19. *We will ensure placements are within our agreement and suit our current situation. We say no more often now because we know we cannot rely on any support by agency or Child Safety. When a CSO or Agency Support person changes then so does everything else.*
20. *Regular once a month respite break is needed as two children are FASD and other suspected conditions. I am looking after children aged 2-18 (one has transitioned out of care but has learning difficulties and still needs a lot of support and is not able to go independent).*
21. *Have already resigned as carers due to {CSSC de-identified} not responding and providing support when requested many times.*
22. *Support workers need to support better.*
23. *Support particularly around accessing and linking to Centrelink services - increased communication between Departmental agencies and automation of this process, or at least making most of it accessible online - for people working full time the process is impossible to complete and seems to be hurdle after hurdle. More support from agency around appropriate training opportunities and provision of more information around placements.*
24. *At times we have felt harassed and pressured by our agency due to the high needs for placements in our area. To the point that we felt we needed to take a break. This has since stopped as we insisted we be placed offline. We feel that the home visits from CV, Child Safety and Agency becomes too much particularly when you have had stable placements for 3-5 years. As carers we wish to maintain our employment and this can impact on this greatly. To be honest we actually prefer to deal directly with Child Safety.*
25. *If the children were reunified or not to stay with me under a long term order.*
26. *Support needed for one of my girls is not happening this could mean a placement breakdown.*
27. *The Department is not child focused its numbers and money focused.*
28. *No future offers of placements within FCA would perhaps encourage me to withdraw sooner.*
29. *If support doesn't improve I may relocate to a bigger centre.*
30. *If the child currently in my care could have the opportunity to gain a permanency order I would likely continue to care for child until they are 18. If the child's behaviour became unmanageable or dangerous I would cease care of said child and if this child left my care I would discontinue caring altogether.*
31. *To be treated with respect and listened to when asking for help. Not being judged.*
32. *The Department needs to follow the legislation and not their own opinions and judgements about carers. They feel superior to carers and carers are scared of them.*

33. *If I decided it was not in the best interest of my children to continue.*
34. *Respect would be good. It may get the better of me if no changes.*
35. *We are aiming for long term guardianship to other for all our foster care children.*
36. *CSOs need to take into account the bio children that carers have when it comes to transport arrangements for contact visits. Also it's important not to pressure the carer to provide all transport of the child does not live locally.*
37. *My words continually falling on deaf ears in regard to services my children need.*
38. *Our biggest hurdle has definitely been working with our current CSO and Team Leader. When the children are not treated respectfully it is difficult to work as part of a team.*
39. *Current CSO and Department support.*
40. *The fact the agency never calls on us to care for children.*
41. *Time, support, respite, payment.*
42. *None.*
43. *The lack of support from all agencies and being treated like an idiot.*
44. *I don't really know what this question is meaning. If in the future an issue arose, then yes it would influence it. Or do you mean is there an immediate support which could assist us in choosing not to leave?*
45. *Ongoing financial support.*
46. *Continued support from my Carer agency as they are the most significant reason I am still a carer.*
47. *Waiting for guardianship to other..... (Process taking way to long).*
48. *COMMUNICATION FROM DOCS.*

Carers were asked if they had any suggestions to improve services for Foster and Kinship Carers. The following comments were provided:

1. *The system needs to understand that carers have to work too so shouldn't have so many appointments.*
2. *Better support from Child Safety and a better understanding of child and carer's needs.*
3. *When concerns about behaviour are FIRST addressed and the required support NOT offered or received DONT then blame the carer.*
4. *Online training modules. Peer networking to know the respite carers as 'friends' not just another stranger to take on the kids, they will feel more comfortable if they know carers too.*
5. *Carers need to be viewed as the ones with the most knowledge of the children they are caring for. It needs to be more of a partnership with Child Safety and our opinions and concerns taken into full account and acted on.*
6. *More timely communication. More face to face meetings, not just when a Case Plan is due.*
7. *Do not put high needs mental health children with untrained carers.*
8. *I feel that Foster and Kinship Carers do not have a voice when it comes to dealing with Child Safety. Foster Carers are under appreciated for all of the hard work they do. All it takes is to listen to the Foster Carers concerns and ideas, and sometimes that doesn't seem to happen.*
9. *I'm very happy however with agency person and also CV who has better understanding of child and interacts better.*
10. *Yes, please start working with the carers and listening to them instead of treating them like liars and criminals every time a child has a tantrum and makes up stories about the carer after they have gone home to their families.*
11. *Yes, Child Safety should stop favouring certain carers based on financial need.*

12. *Overhaul of many staff members and Managers. Disallow discrimination against some carers and be consistent in expectations of carers and not have one rule for the 'carers in the good books' and different rules for those who try hardest to advocate for the kids.*
13. *Better communication of information upon initial placement of child, i.e. ATC provided immediately, medical information provided as soon as available (and made a priority).*
14. *Better levels of communication for the kids and carers.*
15. *We are the ones on the ground who have day to day contact with the children and we are not always notified or asked what we think about some of the decisions made for the child by the Dept.*
16. *Yes, open dialogue and better communications between the Department and all other relevant parties, and a review of funding allocations for rural/remote areas.*
17. *The list is so big. Improve communication. Don't use us just as a tool. Share information. Don't insult us, give us respect.*
18. *That all carers including informal be given equal payments. I receive no extra help at all. Single parent pension and family tax benefit is not enough.*
19. *Respite. I've had 2 weekends offered in 15 months. They always say there is no help available.*
20. *Transparency, consistency and some respect towards carers.*
21. *Having somebody with experience in behavioural support or knowledge to be able to call for advice.*
22. *Ability to adopt long-term children. Ability to move inter-state or countries.*
23. *Communication, Communication between all stakeholders!*
24. *Being properly supported by the agency - better support workers having better and more consistent CSOs.*
25. *Believe that people who work can support children just as efficiently as a grandma who stays at home and also believe that people who have not had kids can do just as good a job if not better than others who have ... if a CSO has been a person's CSO when they were in care ... don't let them have anything to do with the case when the persons child comes into care... you can't right the wrongs that you did to a now adult by giving in to them... they know the system and how to play it.*
26. *Be transparent.*
27. *If everyone worked together for best outcomes for our children.*
28. *More information on the child that is coming in to your home, e.g. placement breakdowns.*
29. *Take more consideration the way we put ourselves out there to care for kids and respect our thoughts and ideas. I don't understand why we don't get more say in the parenting of these children while they are in our care when the parents have been deemed unable to care for them for that time.*
30. *Allow carers to support other carers.*
31. *For Child Safety to be transparent.*
32. *Less politics and more understanding, support, services provided for the Carer and their families.*
33. *This space is not big enough, where to start and I've only been caring for a year, very broken system where the kids don't come first and carers are not getting a say.*
34. *Have Child Safety Officers who actually care and show respect to carers and the child in care.*
35. *We need to be more involved in the decisions made by Child Safety.*
36. *More therapeutic support for children and less CSOs involvement.*
37. *More consistent monitoring and quality agency support.*
38. *Communication.*
39. *Access to an online database provided to carers with information such as in the previous questions, some of which I know nothing about. Info sheets, checklists of what we need to be told, and the*

human memory only go so far. Having all the information together and easily accessible to peruse would be immensely helpful when the time arises that it is needed.

40. *Department workers need more training to retain staff and knowledge about the reality of caring for a complex child 24/7.*
41. *More respect shown to carers from Child Safety and its officers.*
42. *Better communication.*
43. *Please for Child Safety to include carers in the sharing of information, plans for the future and decisions.*
44. *Communication, inclusion.*
45. *Information and communication.*
46. *Limit the influence the birth parents have in decisions affecting the child & foster families. Don't insist on children having family contact if child definitely doesn't want to go. Get rid of the carers who are only doing it for the remuneration and don't have the kids best interests at heart. Make sure CSOs are serious about their jobs before employing them AND make sure that they stay in a centre for a minimum of 2 years. That way kids have more stability.*
47. *Give real power to support agencies and separate there contract renewal from the Department.*
48. *You are doing a good job and with more workers your job would be less stressful.*
49. *Give carers more rites to make decisions on care. Such as bus travel to and from school. Waiting weeks or months for a reply with permission is very frustrating and disruptive to carer families who are trying to include a child in usual routines.*
50. *Listen to the carers. They know the kids wants and needs the best. Listen to the kids. They have rights.*
51. *Listen to what we are trying to tell you, help us when we need it not offer help once the placement has become too much to handle , and give consideration to our families around contact with parents, we have to put our whole lives on hold to work around these parents and we are volunteers as we are told. You lose carers because you don't explain that they lose their lives and lifestyle once you become a foster parent.*
52. *For the CSOs: mandatory youth work with the families they would be supporting, prior to them starting employment. They seem to have a lack of understanding of the challenges a foster family faces and the true impact of their words/decisions/etc.*
53. *Communication and reimbursements from the Dept, and Support from Care agencies would be helpful. Most of these agencies don't want you to have a voice and if you speak up, you are treated like.....*
54. *Being a part of the care team. Being recognized as the people who know the children the best.*
55. *Stop changing case workers. Ensure carers are kept in the loop as they are the ones who do the day in and day out. Reimbursements to be more timely and not so much red tape. If CSOs didn't have so much red tape or such high caseloads they would be better equipped to support kids and carers in turn.*
56. *Not sure where to start here.....or clarity of the question.....the system? Or support services? Or other???*
57. *Treat carers with respect.*
58. *EMPLOY MORE CSOs!!!!!!*

Carers were then asked if they could change two things about the Child Protection System tomorrow, what would they be. Carers left the following comments:

1. *More communication from CS with the carer, Child Safety Departments working together, not saying that child falls under another sector so that child is not our concern.*
2. *That Dept. workers have to do respite for a child every so often. They don't get to pick the child.*
3. *That the child behaves & the amount of appointments were scaled back.*
4. *More Child Safety employees. More Child Safety employees.*
5. *More of a focus on providing upfront and ongoing counselling and support initiatives for children with trauma. Better rules around permanency for children in care on long term agreements to give them more certainty and stability.*
6. *That real consideration be given to the placements given between non indigenous carers and indigenous children. Bonds that are built are real are not culturally dependent but based on the human condition. This should not have reverse prejudice applied. The absurd attempt to right historical wrongs is going to result in other wrongs being committed. Allow non indigenous carers permanent care or LTG to others.*
7. *Child Safety should listen to carers as we know the children better than they do. More staff and more qualified staff. We don't have much say in what happens with the children in our care. We are not treated with the respect we deserve. Parents no 1. Child no 2 Carers no 3 and this has been like it for 20 years plus as carers.*
8. *Immediate support when concerns are reported.*
9. *To receive ATC as soon as the current one expires. To receive children's belongings from their parents if on a 2 year plus order.*
10. *Ensure carers always have all of the known information on a child before they set foot in the house, ensure requests for help are met with practical ongoing assistance.*
11. *Respect for younger children's right to choose family contact if they are able to verbalise that they don't want to attend or participate. Listening to carers concerns with open eyes and no judgement.*
12. *Stop letting the parents of the foster child dictate what they want, they've lost that right. More support for carers on all levels.*
13. *Ensure ongoing contact with past long term children in care.*
14. *More decision making involving the care team not just Child Safety and the family. We are kept out of the loop and told late or the day of. Better case management.*
15. *Hmmmm CSO should have hands on experience with traumatised children...a degree is great...I have 2...BUT...hands on experience with children!!... Good carers should be paid accordingly!! (I love SA program of teachers and nurses encouraged to foster.....we have many years' experience with children/behaviour management and most are also parents/ grandparents....this role is more difficult than teaching....I know how important it is...I would only consider leaving due to finances after reunification. I have 2 teacher friends who would be carers under different circumstances... (finances).*
16. *When a child begs to stay with his or her carer while in permanent custody to the Department they should listen to that child and not the child that's causing trouble because he's back with his family as the Department is putting the child in danger by removing them from the care the child loves and feels the safest when the child runs away back to his carer. And stop treating carers like criminals at the say so from one tantrum throwing child.*
17. *Work harder to get kids to return home (we've seen kids who were abused worse in the system than at home). I mean if the government pays \$500 a fortnight to carers, use the money to support*

- parents to keep kids if possible. I would like to see support carers who advocate for their kids, I feel like we get less kids because we advocate for the needs of the children in our care.
18. More like other countries, where after 2 years children can be placed/adopted for their own stability and family inclusion values. Remove some 'power' from Manager so they don't behave like 'God'.
 19. A lot more communication from Child Safety.
 20. Involve carer's in all stakeholder meetings and ask for input into the child when making decisions; temporarily sterilise birth parents until they are deemed fit to be parents. Don't be in a hurry to take the children from their families. When the kids are come into care do not be in a hurry to place them anywhere.
 21. Listen to the child, not the Department worker and in some cases the carer.
 22. More involved staff for the Department. Increase in Carer allowance to acknowledge the care of the child that as carers we do.
 23. Respect and communication.
 24. That when parents are deemed to not have capacity then that also means that they have no visitation rights. Unfair in the child to have parents with more rights than the child.
 25. Respite.
 26. Agencies and Child Safety to follow the statement of commitment for carers and to provide the standard support offered in the foster care handbook. This would help the carers and the kids in care.
 27. Greater focus on the child/children and their right to a safe and happy life rather than the rights of the parent. National review of the child protection system with a view to implementing a consistent national approach.
 28. Caseworkers to respond. Financial support to be realistic.
 29. More information before placement regarding the child. Tips for carers about reunification process which is quickly accessible, i.e. booklet form.
 30. To be seen as a valued member of the care team for the children. To see long-term children being able to easily be given LTG-O.
 31. Be better informed about child/ren when they come into care. Ensure child/ren are supported by all agencies asap.
 32. Better morale in the dept and not so authoritarian. Staff in agencies who can relate to carers situations better.
 33. Break the continued cycle of children being dragged up ... make straight out of Uni people go and work in the real world to get some life experience ... before they start controlling children's lives... ask for their personal view on what they believe where children should be ... especially church going support staff.
 34. Keep children at home unless it is very necessary to remove as sometimes getting abused in foster care is worse than being left at home.
 35. Give them more staff their workloads are to much better communication.
 36. All children removed to have counselling as soon as they enter care. It to be more focused on the children's emotional wellbeing.
 37. How carers are treated. How much say we get in the kids' lives while they are in our care.
 38. Dept workers to ha m do respite care themselves maybe once a month... to see what looking after these children can be like.. and they don't get to choose the child.
 39. That Child Safety talks to Medicare and Centrelink. Long term placements and placement requests are given more consideration around appropriateness of placement to prevent breakdown and then supported with higher levels of respite care.

40. *Fair system based on child's needs, not how much the Department workers like you.*
41. *That children in long term care are able to be adopted.*
42. *We would prefer to have the choice as to whether we would like to be attached to an agency or not.*
43. *To speed up the court process, 5 years and still on an interim custody order.*
44. *Judge each case individually - don't assume kids going back to biological parents is what is best for them. Stop throwing all resources possible to the biological parents to help them better their lives. Give that help and support to the carers and children. Stop making the carers go through so much red tape. Make it easier for them.*
45. *That when a child comes into care, parents lose their guardianship rights to make decisions for a child they couldn't care for. And that the dept listen more to the carers about a child's needs, as they are the ones who live Day in and out with these kids and know them much better than any CSO.*
46. *Raise the carer allowance, with the cost of daily living going up the foster care allowance does not fully cover cost of raising children.*
47. *Child Safety recognising carers as equals and as people not just "carers" The same respect as shown to parents.*
48. *For the children to be heard and to be treated fairly instead as a house to be filled with a bunch of children. Any children sometimes just on a mattress on the floor because the Department calls and says that there is no place for the children to go.*
49. *More appropriate advocacy from Child Safety staff that includes the child, carer and biological family. More consistent and quality monitoring of carers.*
50. *That my foster children could assess appropriate funding for trauma. I had support from the support agency.*
51. *That children are given the option of permanency earlier so that they could have better outcomes for the future. That adoption would be a much more accessible option for our vulnerable children if there is no possibility of being returned to their natural family. That children are removed at an earlier age if it is necessary and parents are given a specific amount of time to improve their situation before children are allowed permanency and stability instead of going through the trauma of many failed reunifications over many years.*
52. *Faster resolution of problems, I have been trying to arrange DNA testing for child for 5 years, and we still have not received a final word on this.*
53. *Easier access to information regarding services. More certainty of what order your child in care is on.*
54. *Have a CSO who listened or read case notes prior to judging Carers.*
55. *The Department's attitude negative attitude about carers and their judgemental ways.*
56. *Find a way to keep children with their families wherever possible. I fear that by the time foster children are returned home they and their parents will be so damaged and altered by the process that their relationship will never be the same again.*
57. *Consider the child first not the parents. Respect carers more and pay them better.*
58. *Communication and updated information.*
59. *Be open and all on same page. Be honest with both the carer and parents. Also if the placement is not changing and the parents have not engaged don't drag the orders out. Its unfair on these children, they need to know they are stable and not just a number to Child Safety.*
60. *More respect for the carers. Take carers feedback into account after all we are the ones taking care of the children on a daily basis.*

61. *Immediate services for children removed from parents. If family cannot obtain a blue card visits should be supervised.*
62. *That children and carers are treated as valuable and worthy of truthful and professional conversations.*
63. *Communication, children's needs not thought of first.*
64. *Communication.*
65. *Give bio parents one year to clean up their act & reunify otherwise child goes straight into permanent home. Make adoption more easily accessible for those children you know are never going to get a fair go at a happy & productive 'life'.*
66. *Greater financial support for the carers and greater access to files.*
67. *Listen better to carers concerns over parent demands.*
68. *Faster access to Medicare information Health Care Cards as well as Placement Agreements. Speed up the court process, its hell for carers and children to sit in the temporary care month by month limbo with no access to Centrelink, childcare and not knowing how long the child or children will be in your care for.*
69. *It should be a prerequisite for CSOs to be foster carers for 12 mths prior to being approved. They need to know the system from this side of the fence first. They need to know what it's like to be disrespected and have to deal with the fallout with the kids of stupid and insensitive CSO decisions. That some of the CSO training should include experienced foster carers describing the challenges they experienced working with docs and explaining their reasons for leaving.*
70. *Remove family contact for people still doing drugs and make placements only end during school holidays.*
71. *More about the children and less what the parents want clothes vouchers or food vouchers or more money to support these kids. Mine are well dressed and very well taken care of but it costs me money out of my own pocket to take care of them.*
72. *CSOs and upper management understand the challenges a foster family faces and the true impact of their words/decisions/etc. Stop dragging children through the mud for years. Cut off the parents sooner after a certain number of orders so they children can move on and stop living in limbo. It took 4 years in care before my child was finally granted a long term order.*
73. *Employ more experienced staff, not these twits that just come out of Uni and everything is text book style and they have no hands on experience and sit there and tell you what to do and how to do it.*
74. *Permanency for all children Increased financial support.*
75. *Lower caseloads so children have better quality care and attention. Less red tape for children, carers and CSOs.*
76. *Paid carers, less cases per worker to allow genuine support and connections.*
77. *Put the children first not the parents.*
78. *EMPLOY MORE CSOs. Caseload BLINDINGLY OBVIOUS too big.*

Comments with any identifying or sensitive information about a child or young person in care, names of workers and/or locations have been removed from the public copy of this report to ensure confidentiality of children, young people and their carers are maintained. However comments have been included in a version submitted to the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women to ensure that carers' voices are heard.

Finally – carers were asked if they would recommend fostering to a friend.

