

CARER EXIT SURVEY

North Qld Region

2017-2018



FOSTER CARE QUEENSLAND

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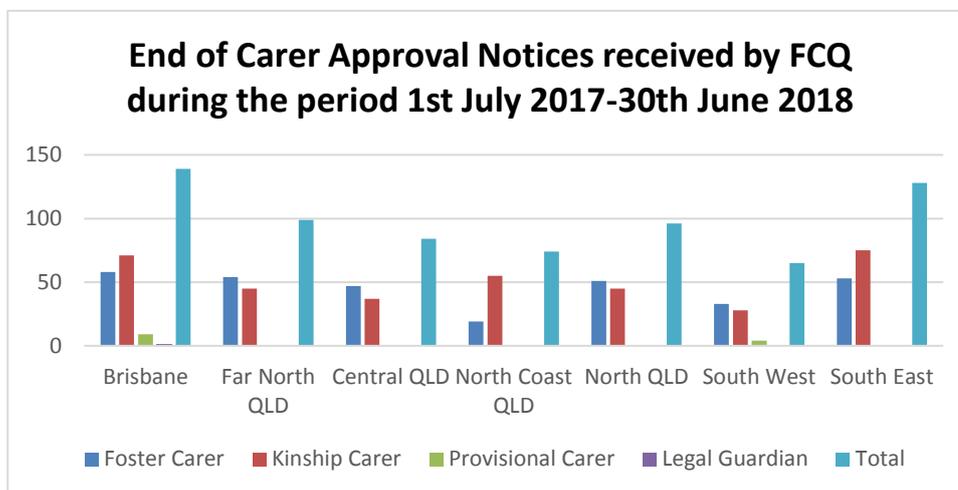
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Executive Summary

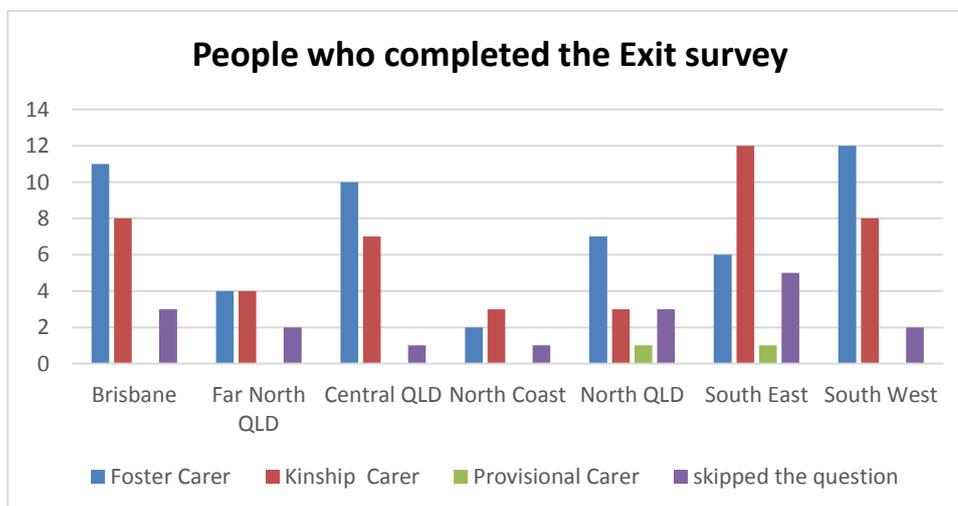
Information relating to End of Carer Approval Notices

This report brings Foster Care Queensland (hereafter referred to as FCQ) to the end of our tenth year managing the Exit Interview Program. For this report FCQ has maintained the breakdown of regions to previous seven regions prior to the change that occurred as the majority of the information related to the time that the regions were broken down to seven. Next financial year’s report will reflect the new changes to the regions.

FCQ received a total of 685 Exit interview referrals for the period **1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018**. 315 of the total were Foster Carers, 356 of the total were Kinship Carers, 13 were Provisional Carers and 1 identified as the legal guardian.



116 Exit surveys were completed on Survey Monkey, either by the Carer’s directly, FCQ inputting the data on the Carer’s behalf from a paper based survey that the Carer was sent and returned to FCQ or the Carer requested a telephone interview and FCQ inputted the data on to Survey Monkey during the telephone interview. The return rate this year in relation to completed surveys, is 16.9%.



The procedures for responding to notifications of End of Carer Approval notices is as follows;

- FCQ sends a letter when they receive the End of Carer Approval Notice from the Department informing the person/persons that FCQ has received the End of Carer Approval Notice and asking if they would like to provide information about their experiences as Carers. The letter also provides a number of ways they can complete the survey, for example: online, over the phone or a paper survey can be sent to them with a return stamp addressed envelope, which would then be inputted into Survey Monkey by FCQ.
- After a two week period FCQ would follow up via phone calls where possible, with the past Carers to confirm receipt of the letter and discuss the opportunities to providing their experiences. Where no phone contact details have been provided, FCQ would email the past Carers if this was an option, having been provided with the email addresses on the End of Carer Approval Notices.

During conversations with people in regards to the Exit Survey, they are either of the opinion that their feedback would not make any difference as “nothing changes” or they feel that talking about their experiences would be too distressing. This has impacted on the number of people who have taken the survey and FCQ has seen an increase in people stating that they would not like to undertake the survey.

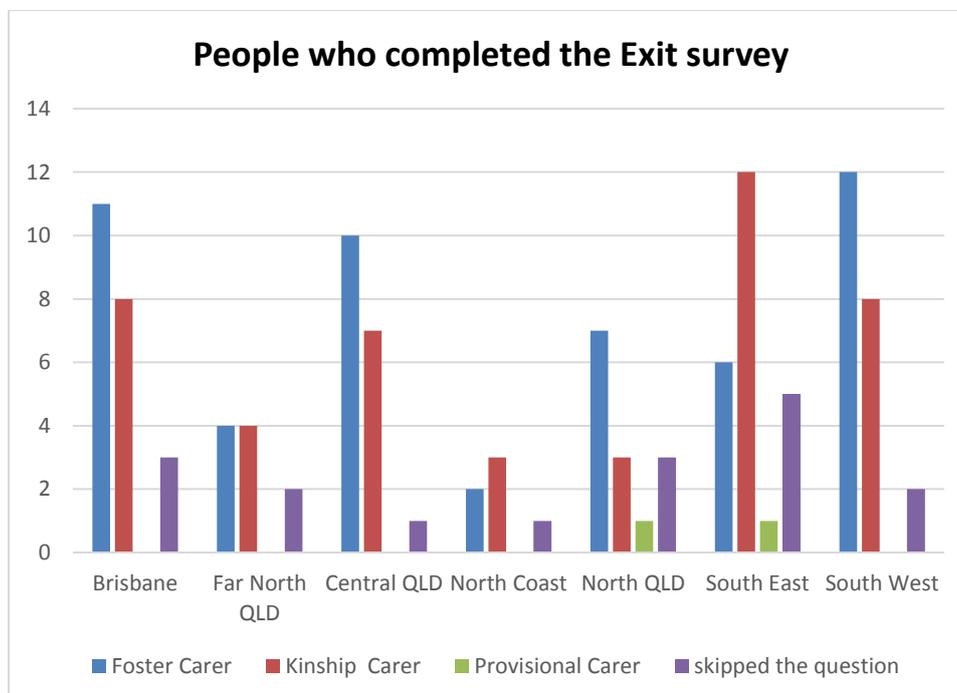
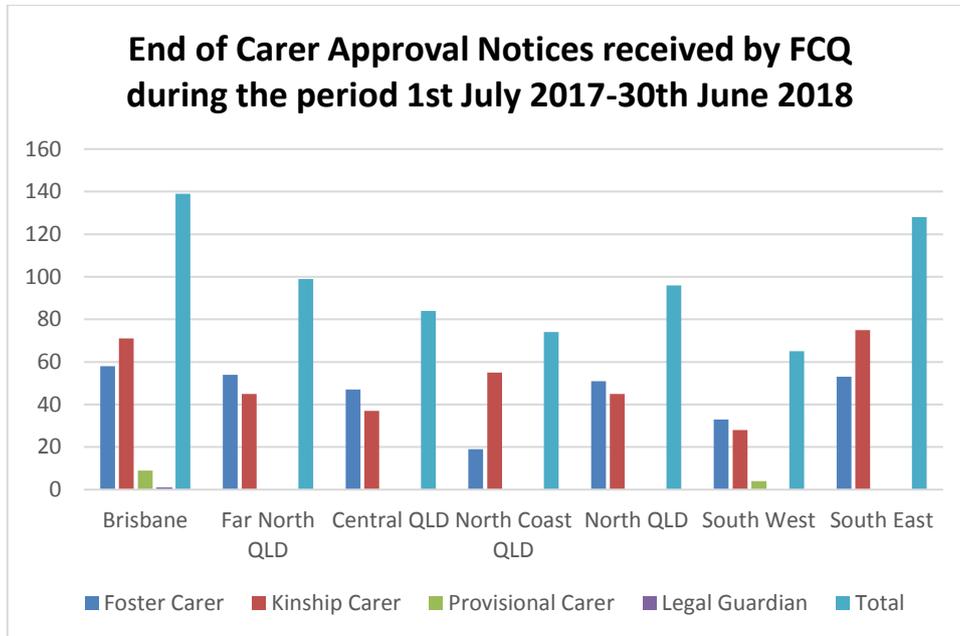
It was acknowledged by the Brisbane Region in March 2018 that they had reviewed their data and failed to provide FCQ with all the required End of Carer Approval Notices, approximately 118. It was agreed that they would provide all additional information to FCQ. As part of the notifications that FCQ receive contact is made via letter within a week, it was acknowledged that most of the notifications that were received from the Brisbane region dated back some time since the person stopped being a Carer, but all the past Carers were provided with a letter to ensure that they had to the opportunity to undertake an exit survey if they wanted too.

It has been noted over the years that FCQ do not receive all the End of Carer Notices that should be provided to FCQ to give the opportunity to people who would like to undertake a survey and this needs to improve to ensure equal opportunity for everybody to provide feedback.

As stated in previous reports FCQ continues to receive a number of End of Carer Approval Notices but based on the figures provided by the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women we continue to receive significantly less notifications than we should be receiving.

Overall Data and Findings

The report outlines all the feedback from all 116 carers and it is sectioned into regions so that the information is specific to the feedback from each region. The regions will change in the next report for 2018-2019 to reflect the change in regions.



Overall, across the state people identified positives aspects of their time as Foster Carers and these related to;

- The range of allowances provided by Child Safety to help meet the cost of caring for a child
- The allowance payment rates

- How quickly allowances were paid
- Opportunities carers were given to participate in training and professional development
- Pre-service training delivery
- Standard training modules 5,6 and 7
- Information provided about your role and responsibilities
- Information provided about Foster and Kinship Care Services role and responsibilities
- The manner in which the carer approval renewal process was undertaken

Overall it was also identified that the majority of people completing the survey were satisfied with training and development.

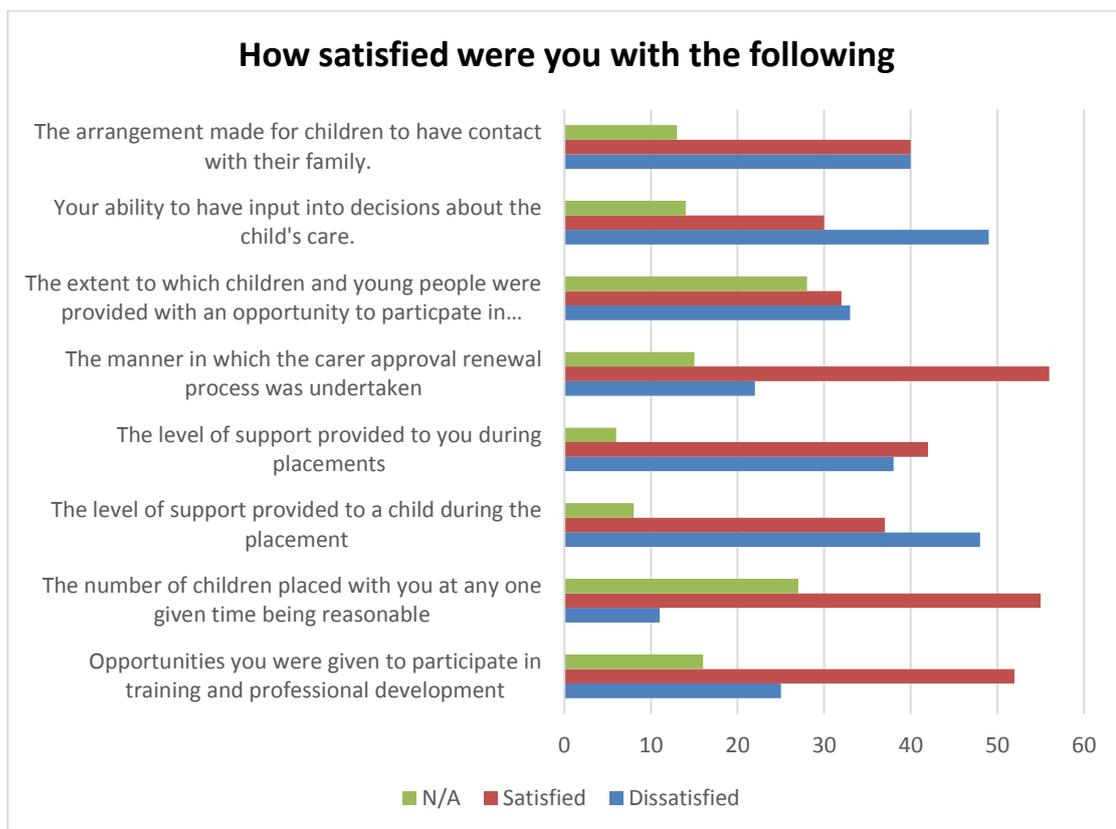
Overall across the state, there were similarities in terms of negative feedback provided, listed below are common themes from information provided in the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 reports;

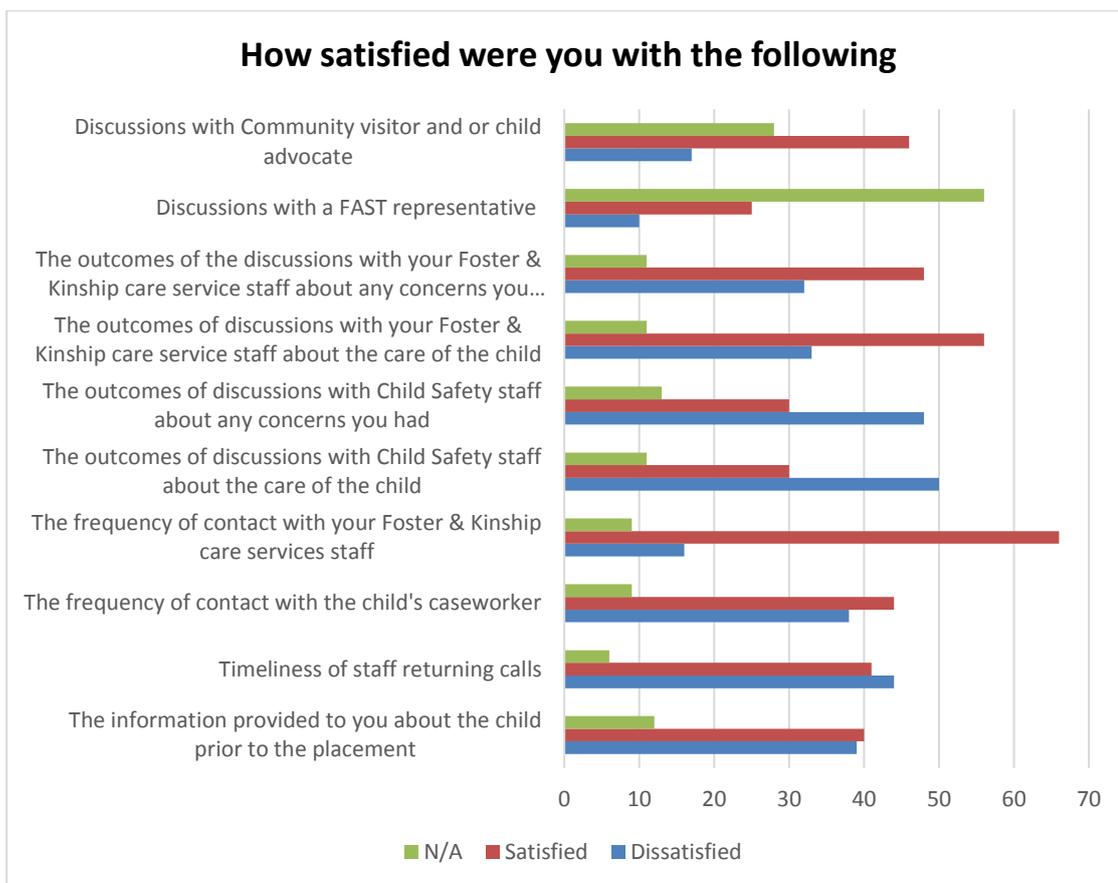
- Carers not feeling part of a care team
- Child Safety's policies and procedures, overall most people were dissatisfied where applicable.
- Child Safety's handling of a Harm Report/SOC process, overall dissatisfaction was significantly higher where applicable across the state.
- The carers ability to make a complaint about a service provided by Child Safety
- The carers ability to appeal a decision related to you that was made by Child Safety
- Carers not feeling listened too in relation to the needs of the child and concerns
- Lack of consultation prior to a child being placed with carers and at times no information provided about the child
- Telephone calls and emails not being responded to by the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.
- Lack of feeling valued as a volunteer
- The level of support provided to the child during placement.

The findings relating to what were the most challenging aspects of being a carer have remained consistent over the years that FCQ has been undertaking the Exit Survey Report. The lack of communication and feeling part of a care team is dominated throughout the reports for each region and this would be suggestive that this is a state wide issue in regards to the feedback provided.

People were asked to provide their experience of caring and how satisfied they were with

- The arrangement made for children to have contact with their family, the response overall was equal with 50% feeling satisfied and 50% feeling dissatisfied in relation to where this was applicable.
- Your ability to have input into decisions about the child's care, the response indicated for the regions overall where applicable that most people were dissatisfied.
- The outcomes of discussions with Child Safety staff about any concerns you had, overall state wide for the people who undertook the survey the response was a higher percentage of dissatisfied.
- Discussions with Community Visitor and or Child Advocate was significantly high in terms of people being satisfied with this area of their caring experiences.

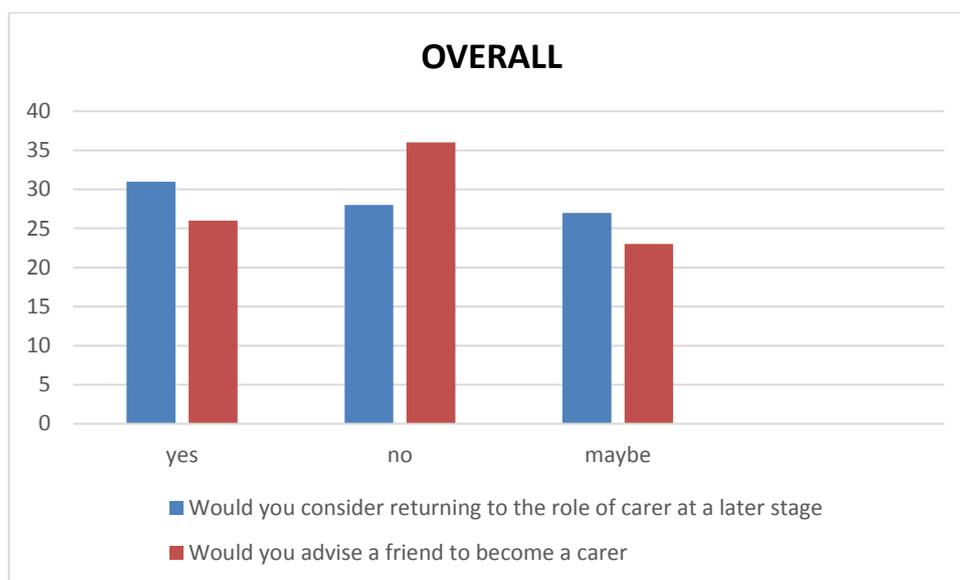




People were asked if they had attended training in the last 12 months, six out of the seven regions signified a high percentage of 'no' in their responses.

People were also asked if they had a Foster Care Agreement in place and all seven regions signified a high percentage of 'yes' in their responses.

People completing the survey were asked if they would advise a friend to become a Carer and if they would consider returning to the role of Carer at a later stage, the responses overall for QLD are listed below;



The majority of Carers who completed the survey identified that they started fostering due to a desire to help children. This information has also been consistent throughout the years. From the extracts taken from Survey Monkey in relation to the responses from the Carers who have exited the system, it is evident that their motivation was predominantly a desire to care for children but this was diminished by the lack of feeling valued or being part of a care team.

In summary, people identified that they would consider returning to Foster Care at a later stage but the margin between they would and would not is only slight. A higher number of people identified that they would not advise a friend to become a Carer.

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23 July 2018

Summary - North QLD Region

FCQ received a total of 685 End of Carer approvals during the period of 1st July 2017-30th June 2018. 96 (14%) of the 685 approvals were received from the North QLD region. All 96 End of Carer Approvals were sent an acknowledgement letter from FCQ and were contacted via telephone to discuss completing the Carer Exit Survey.

Information taken from the end of carer approvals

The 96 End of Carer approvals consisted of;

- 1 identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 67 identifying as neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander
- 16 identifying as Aboriginal not Torres Strait Islander
- 4 identifying as Torres Strait Islander not Aboriginal
- 8 End of Carer approvals did not provide this information
- The end of carer approvals also identified that from the 96;
 - 45 identified as Kinship Carers
 - 51 identified as Foster Carers

There were 14 people (14.5%) from the North QLD area that completed a Carer Exit Survey. The following details relate to the responses that have been received from the surveys.

For the total of the 96 End of carer approvals received, only:

- 7 Foster Carers completed the survey out of 51 (13.7%)
- 3 Kinship Carers completed the survey out of 45 (6.6%)
- 1 person identified as a Provisional Carer when they completed the survey but none of the End of Carer Approval Notices identified a provisional carer.

The 14 people who completed the survey provided the following information;

- 7 identified as Foster Carers
- 3 identified as Kinship Carers
- 1 identified as a Provisional Carer
- 3 people skipped this question

10 identified as neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander

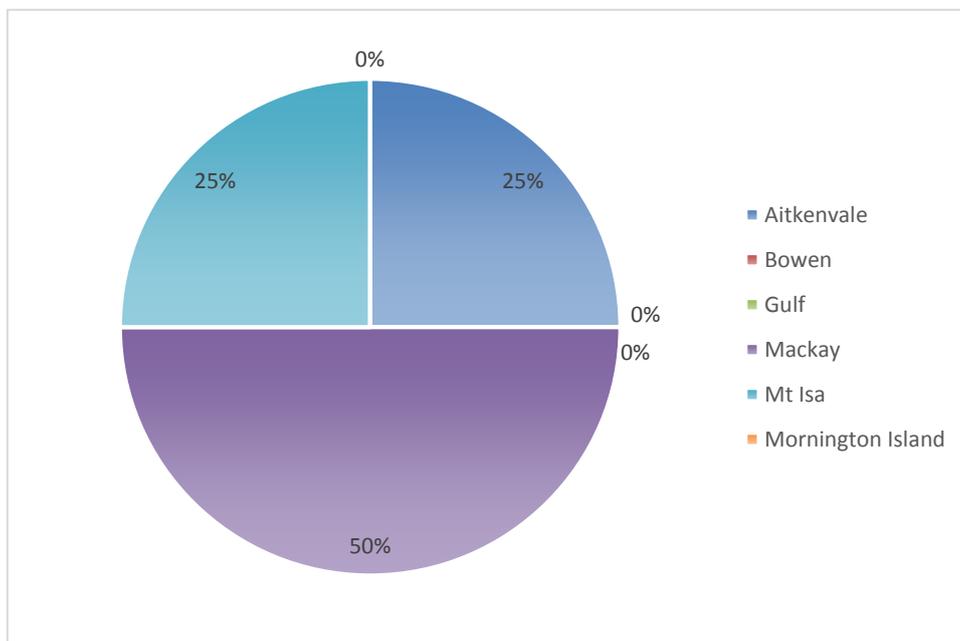
1 identified as Torres Strait Islander

1 identified as Aboriginal

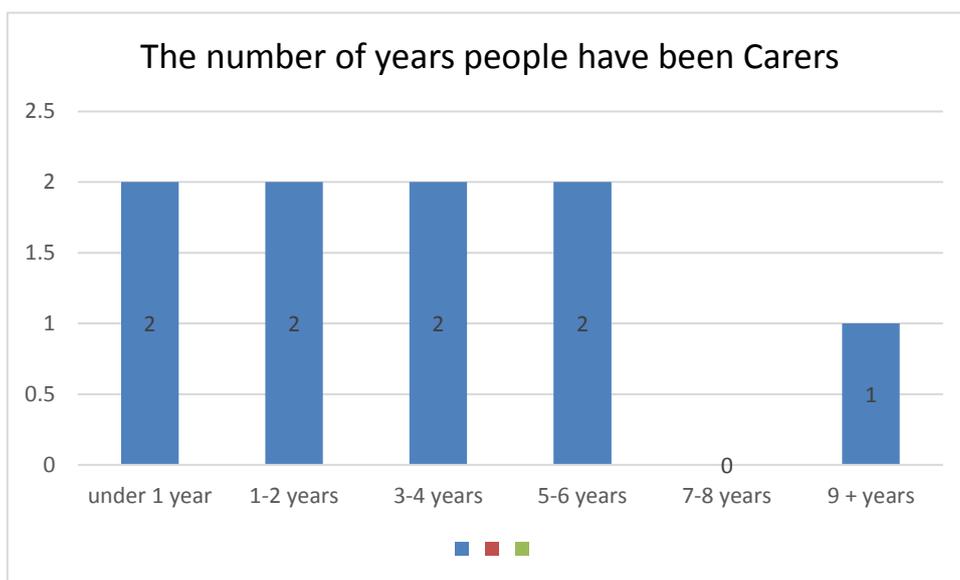
2 identified as other (Fijian, Caucasian Australian)

Question: About You

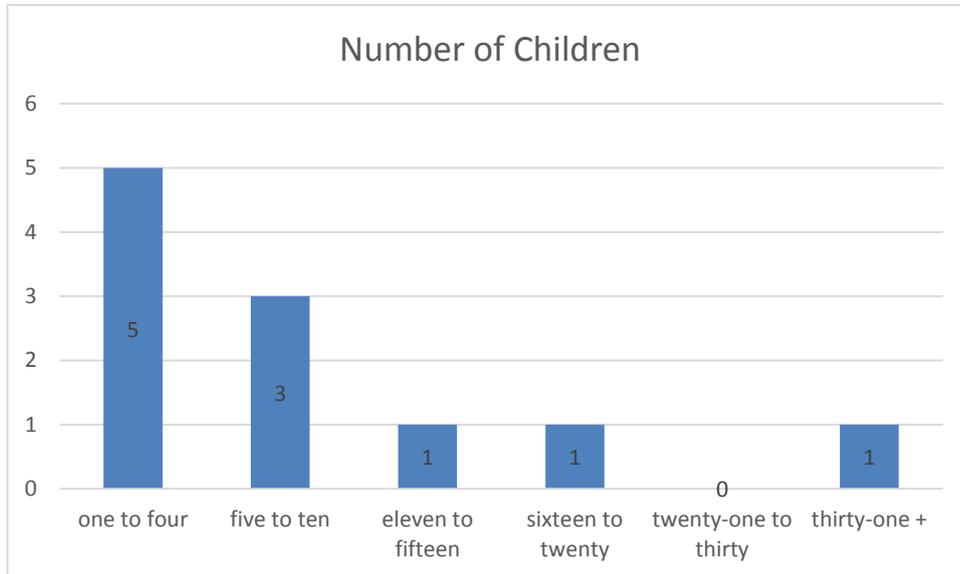
Information identifies which child safety office the person was attached to while they were Foster Carers.



Information is requested regarding the person’s time spent as a Carer, identifying when they started as a carer and when they stopped. Below is a graph that identifies the length of time stated in the responses.

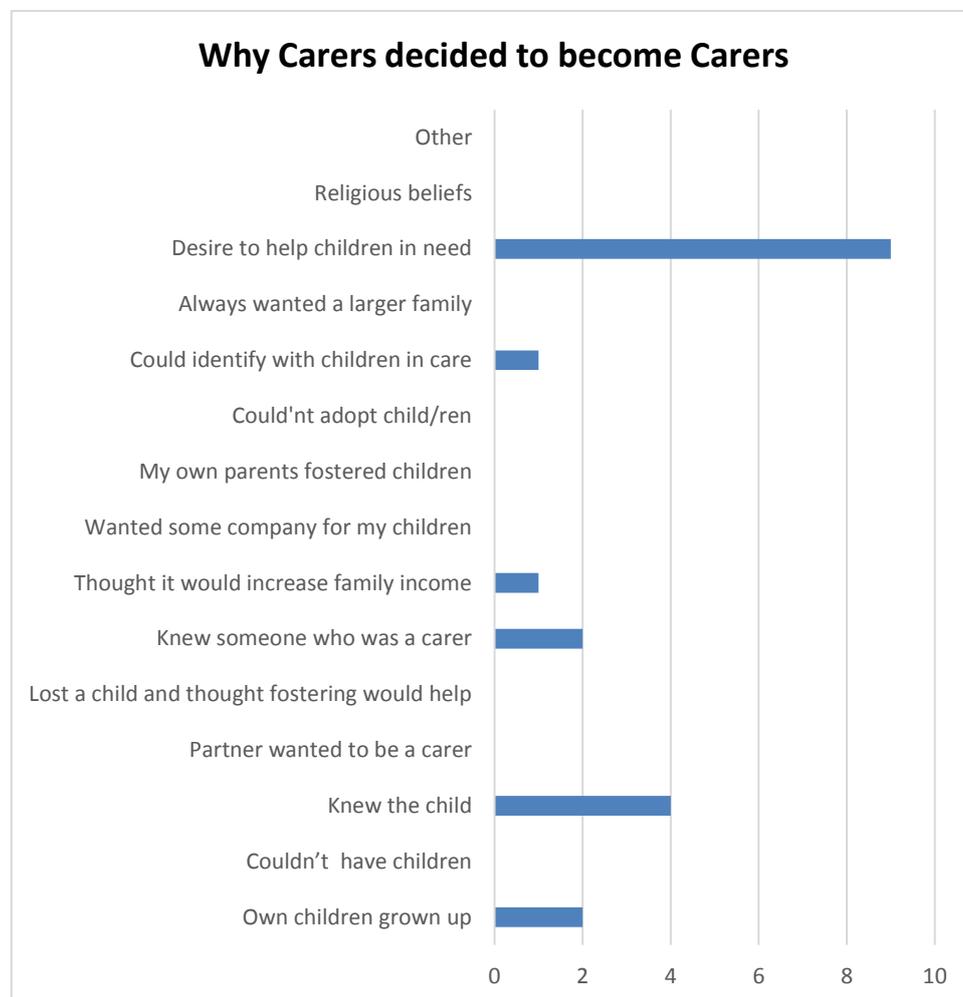


The information provided also evidences the number of children the person/persons have provided care to.



Question: About Your Role as a Foster/Kinship Carer

People were asked to identify what made them decide to become a Foster Carer.



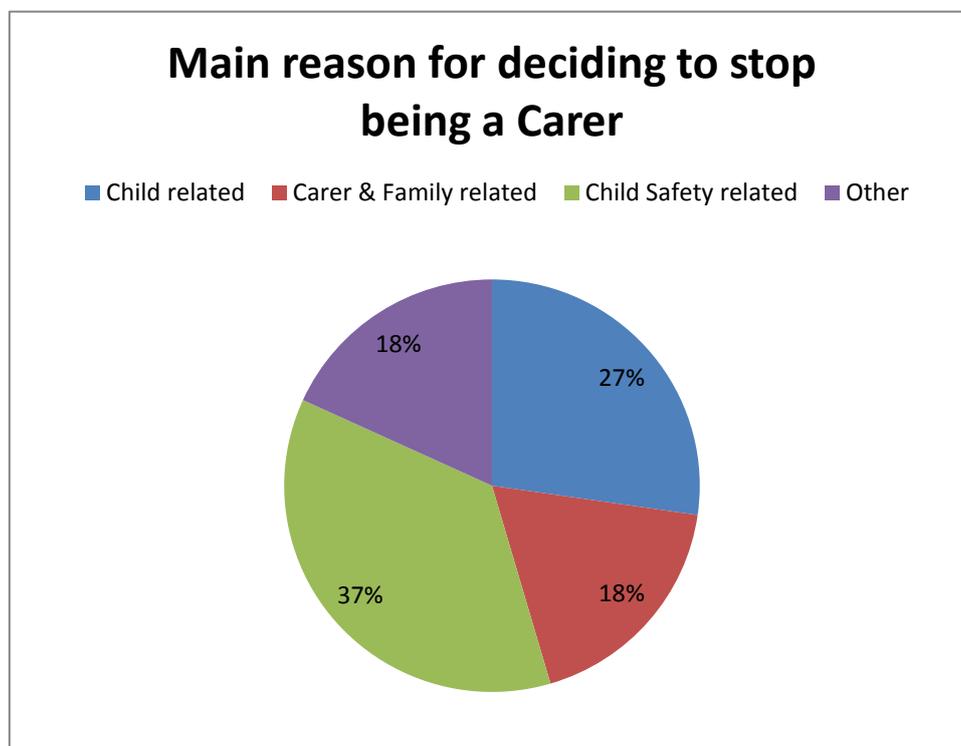
Below is a selection of some of the comments provided by the people undertaking the survey in relation to why they decided to become a carer. This information would be consistent with the section under other on the graph.

- I preferred my nephew to be placed with family rather than unknown foster carers
- No
- I also currently work at child Safety in a Business Officer role so have seen the children come into care and the difficulties we have placing children
- The Foster care system had let my grandson down over and over and over again throughout his 6years in their care. I needed to rescue him and facilitate some healing. I did achieve this partly though so damaged emotionally was he that I was unable to give him the care he required. I still see him once a week and am continuing to instigate and demonstrate love trust and fairness for him.

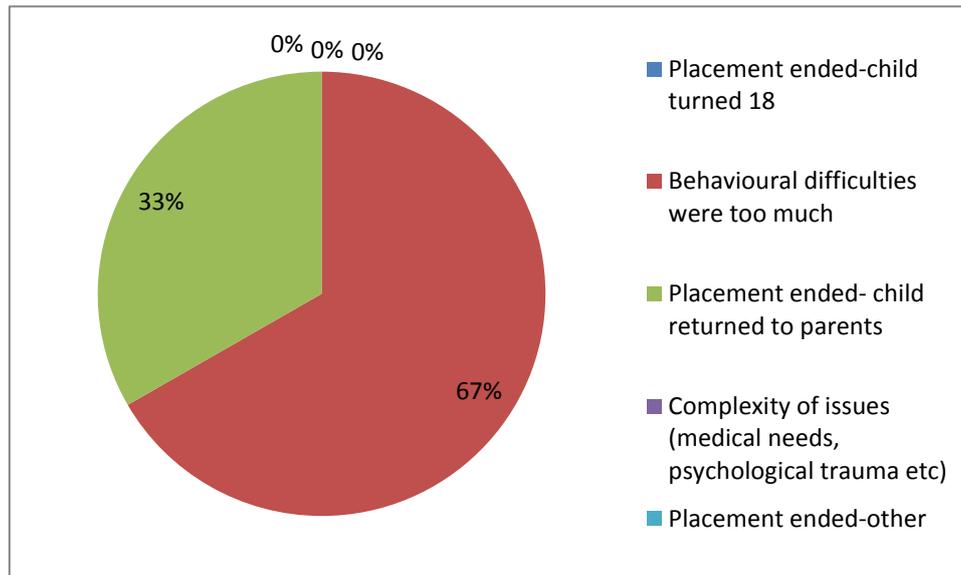
- Having a dead beat father, to some degree I knew what it was like to have a bad parent, and other experiences in my past as a child I could also relate to, so I just wanted to help children, even if it was just one, change their future and let them know they were loved
- I knew the child and was a relative of the family.
- Because my son's and the kids mother couldn't have them at that time to care for

Question: Reasons for Discontinuing as a Foster/Kinship Carer

People undertaking the survey were asked to provide the reason for them deciding to stop being carers. They are provided with four options then asked to elaborate in relation to the option that they have selected.



The following information will be specific to the reason that has been provided in this question. If the respondents answered that they ceased being carers due to child related reasons, they are asked to expand on the reasons, as follows.

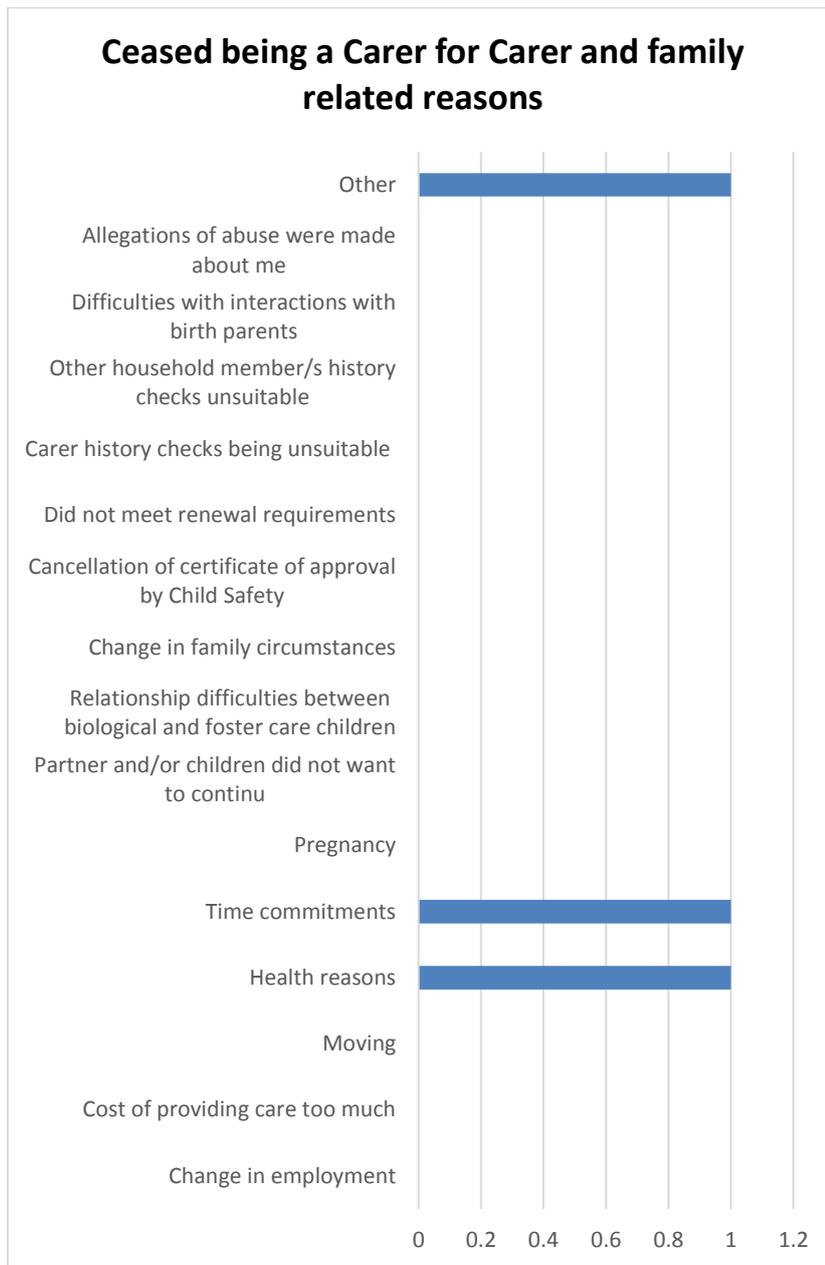


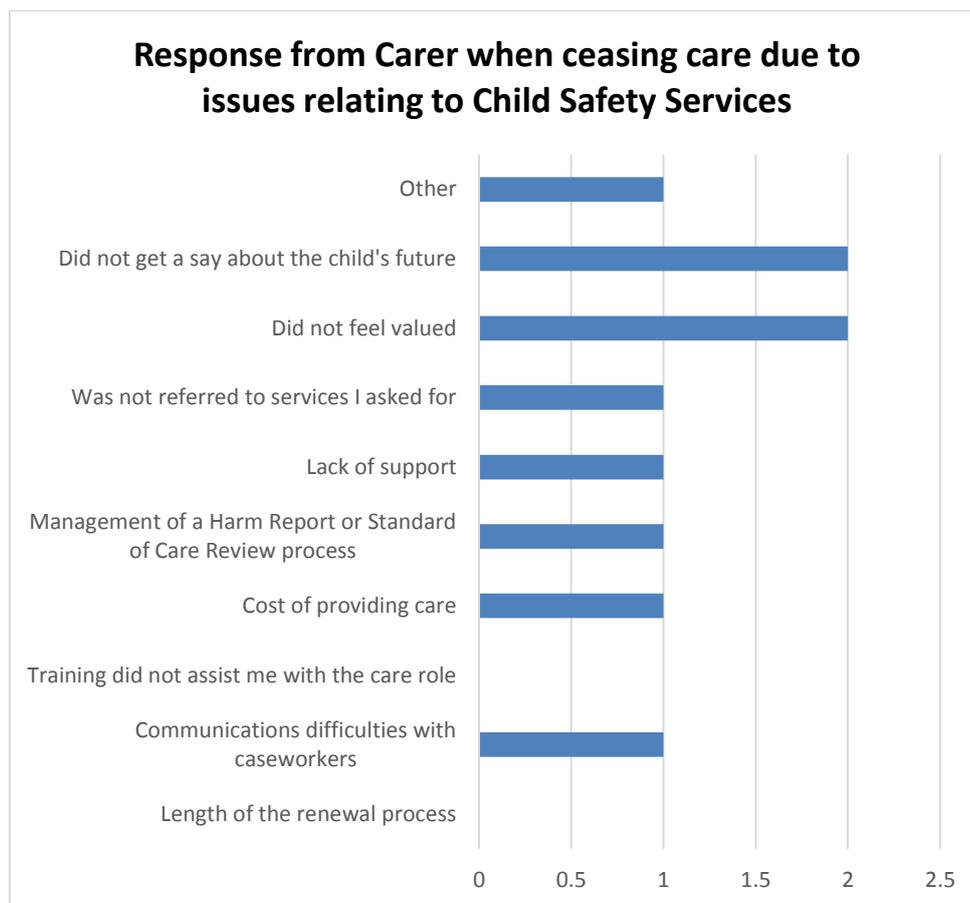
Below are extracts of comments that were made by people completing the survey in relation to this question.

- Support was not forthcoming in a timely or appropriate manner by child safety and their agencies. Too little too late
- only completed respite
- My very traumatised boy had no ability to form relationships though we built trust and respect but as he got bigger and stronger and hormonal the violence he'd grown up with became his control tool. He beat me and my husband then stopped him, Harm report against us and again against me, I resigned my care as I knew I was unable to give him what he needs right now. Safety for self
- Children went to the father but now living with their mother

For people who stated that they ceased caring due to carer and family reasons, they were asked to expand on their response.

- Sufficient bedrooms
- Mother had surgery and did not recover so now requires full time care which myself and son are providing at home. So feel like I have no time for a foster child at this stage
- Children went back to their father but now living back with their mother
- Mother requires full time care





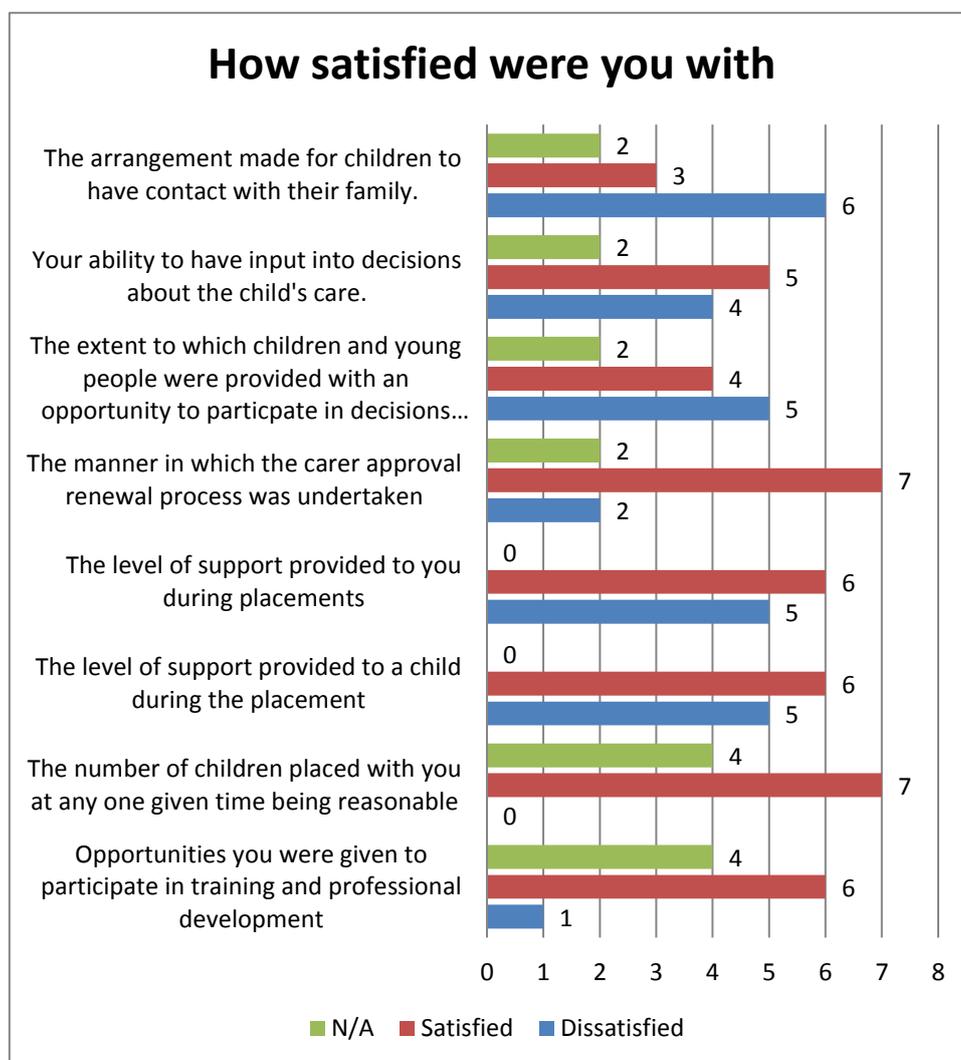
Below are extracts of comments made by Carers in relation to the questions referring to why they ceased as carers if this was related to Child Safety Services.

- Bullied
- We felt we were being personally attacked and targeted
- The department is a total mess and the fact that after 4 years I couldn't get a permanent placement was one of the main reasons that I decided to stop, I didn't get into fostering to do respite work, and that was all that I was really offered for the majority of my time, and it ruined it for me, I really had the ability to help a child and give them what they were missing yet was not given the opportunity.
- Children went back to their father but now living with their mother
- No support for carers while my husband was very ill in hospital.



Question: The Experience of Caring

People undertaking the surveys were asked how satisfied they were with different elements of their involvement with the Department of Child Safety and the agency.



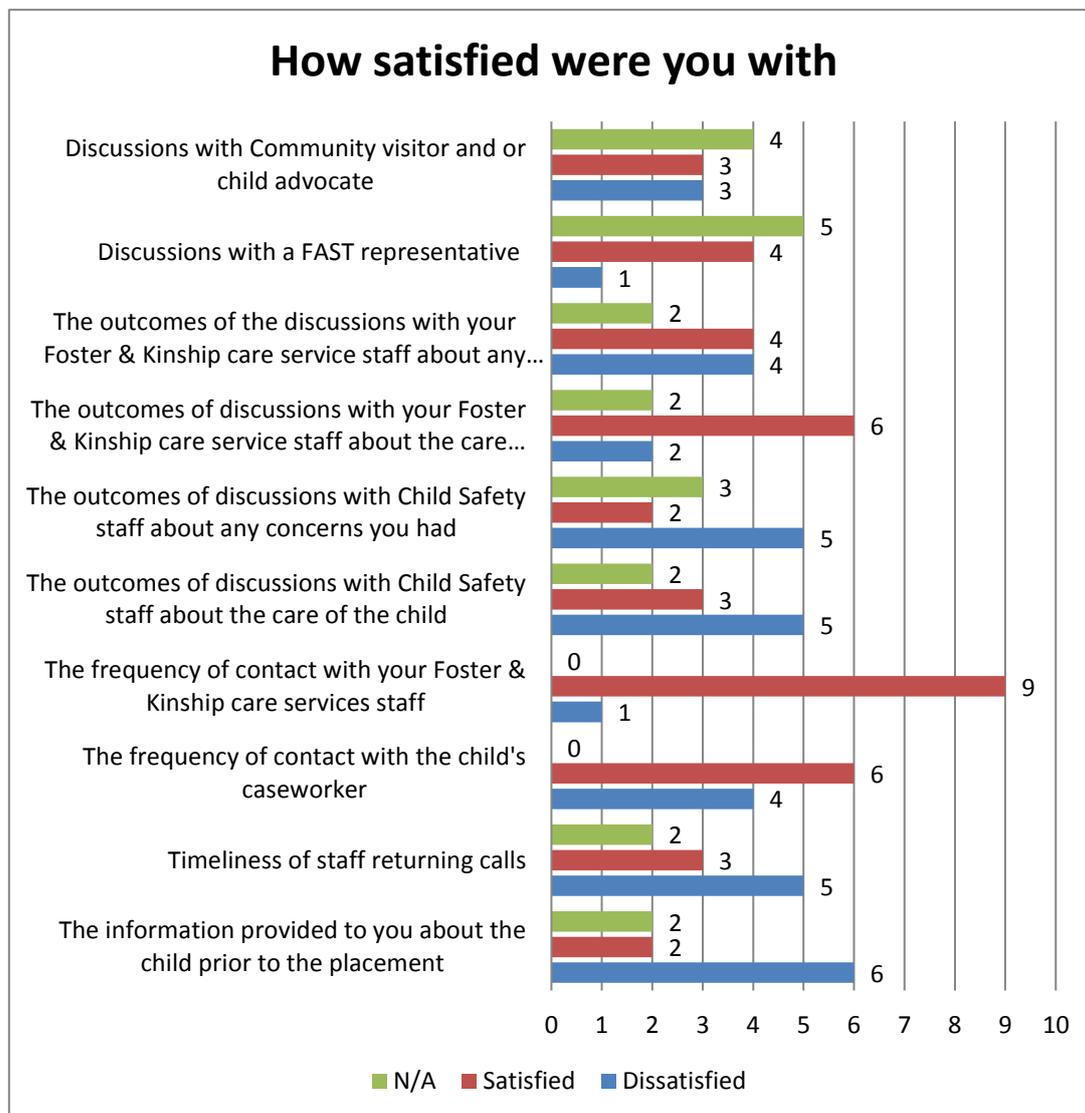
Below are extracts from comments made in reference to this question by the people undertaking the surveys.

- Due to not receiving phone calls for offers we had decided to not continue to care until our youngest son (19 years) has moved out of home, that way we would have another bedroom to offer a child. We don't believe in the children sharing or squashing young people into sleeping arrangements.
- Just no communication between child safety and myself felt like they just dump kids and left but then again I did only did emergency placements so no real placement agreement completed.

- In the 12 months I had my grandson he had 3 child safety officers in Gympie and 4 others in Townsville. Communication was at best disastrous at worst plainly uncaring, unprofessional and downright illegal on child safeties part. This contributed to my inability to manage the complexities of my grandson's trauma, continuity of care, we had no respite for 5 months and one professional support person from EVOLVE who actually gave me support. Child safety has a lot of research to do on this case as he had been sexually abused while in their care and no one followed it up. He was four to five years old and in Victoria, please contact me about this as he still wants answers.
- A new relationship is what put the final nail in the coffin, I was already leaning towards leaving but meeting my partner confirmed my decision.
- Health reasons.
- Stop being a kinship carer as the children had gone back to their father but now living with their mother but I'm going to be doing some more general foster caring.
- Unhappy with service.
- The children went back to their father at the time that's why I stopped.
- We were unhappy with the fact that we very rarely receive a phone call for a placement. And the Support person wasn't always the best from the support agency.
- I am now want to be a general foster carer.

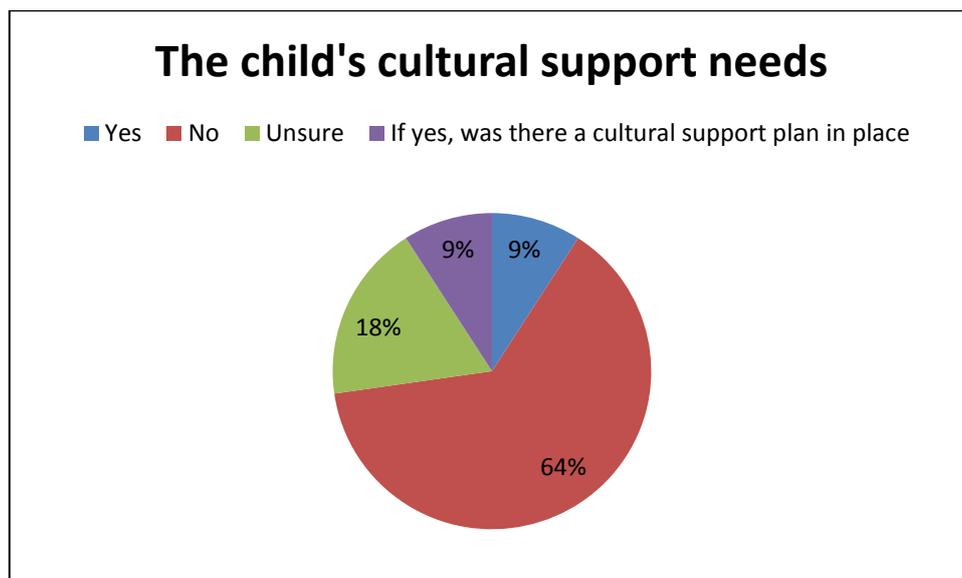
Question: The Experience of Caring – Communication

Carers were asked how satisfied they were with their experiences of communication with relevant stakeholders. Below is a table that outlines the responses and extracts of further comments that they wanted to make in relation to the question.

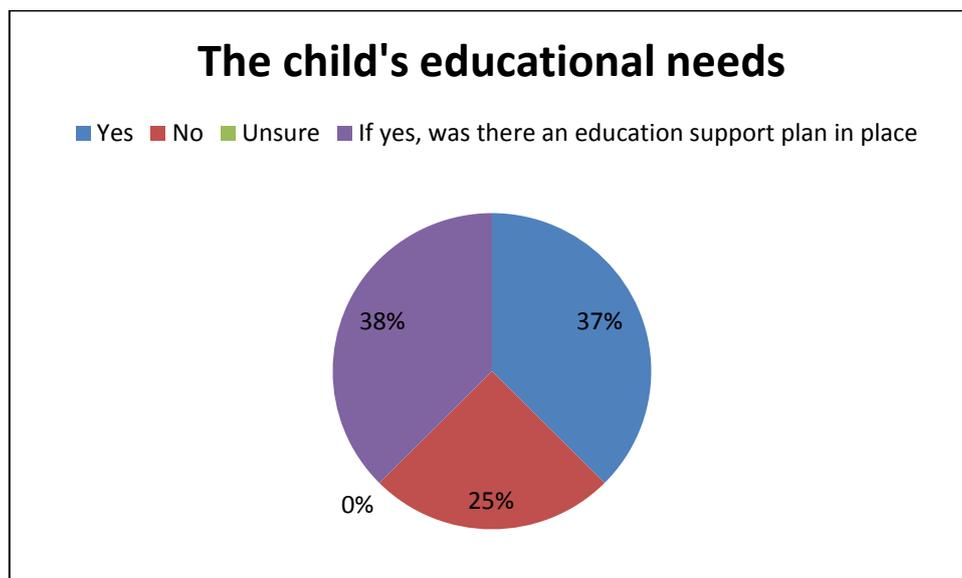


The carers were asked to identify whether Child Safety discussed the following matters with them.

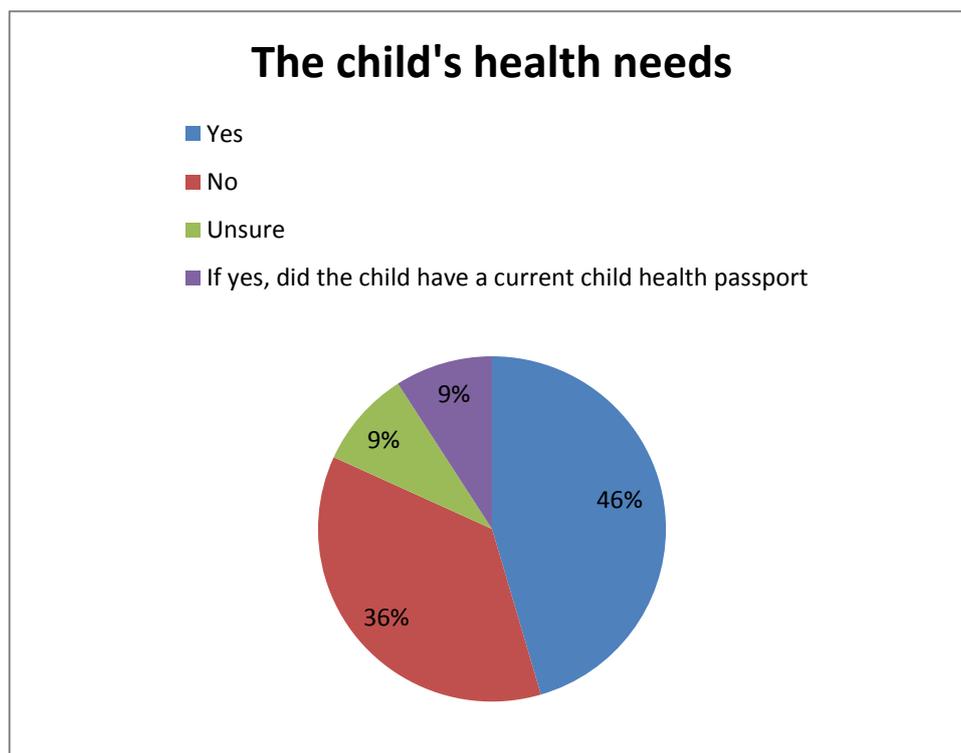
- The Child’s cultural support needs
- The child’s educational needs
- The child’s health needs
- None of the above



9% of Carers identified that Child Safety discussed the child’s cultural support needs and 9% had a cultural support plan in place.



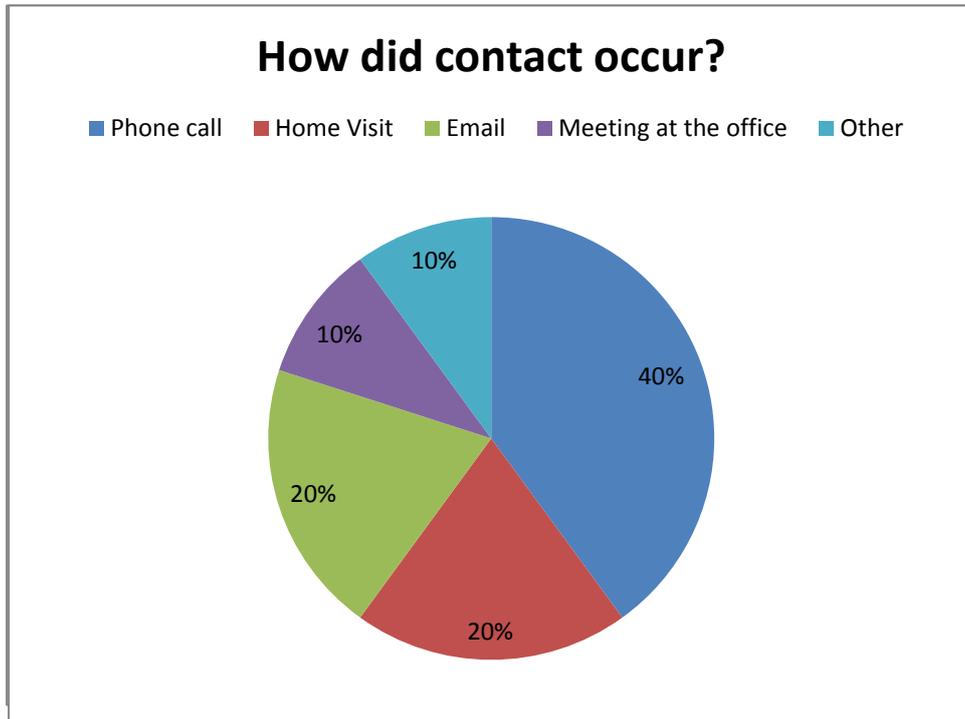
37% of Carers identified that Child Safety discussed the child’s educational needs and 38% identified that an educational support plan was in place.



46% of Carers identified that Child Safety discussed the child's health needs but only 9% had a current child health passport in place.

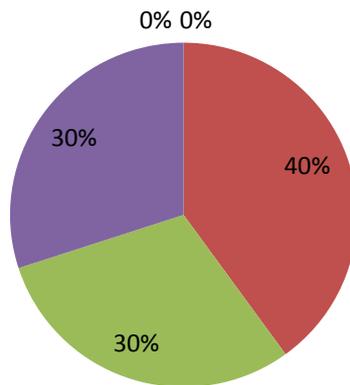
Carers were asked if they had received information regarding FAST Representatives and Foster Care QLD, the table below identifies their responses.

Information relating to contact taking place and comments made in relation to the question.



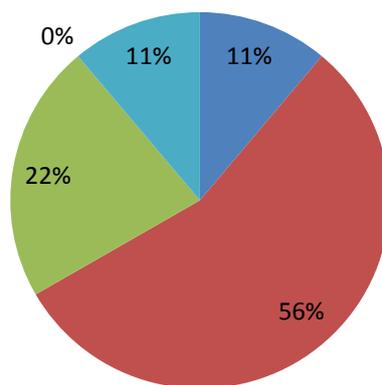
How often did you have contact with your Foster and Kinship Care Service?

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Monthly ■ Only occasionally ■ Not applicable



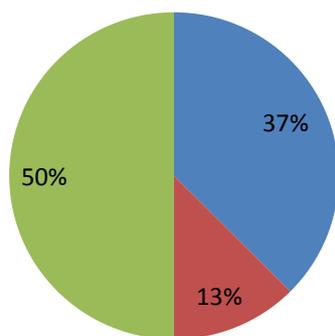
How did this contact occur?

■ Phone call ■ Home visit ■ E-mail ■ Meeting at the office ■ Other



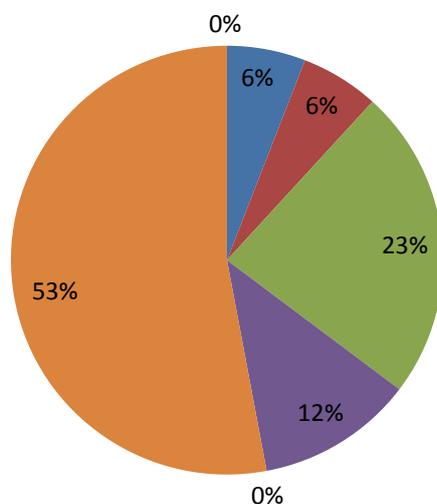
What was your preference regarding contact?

■ E-mail ■ Phone ■ Face to face



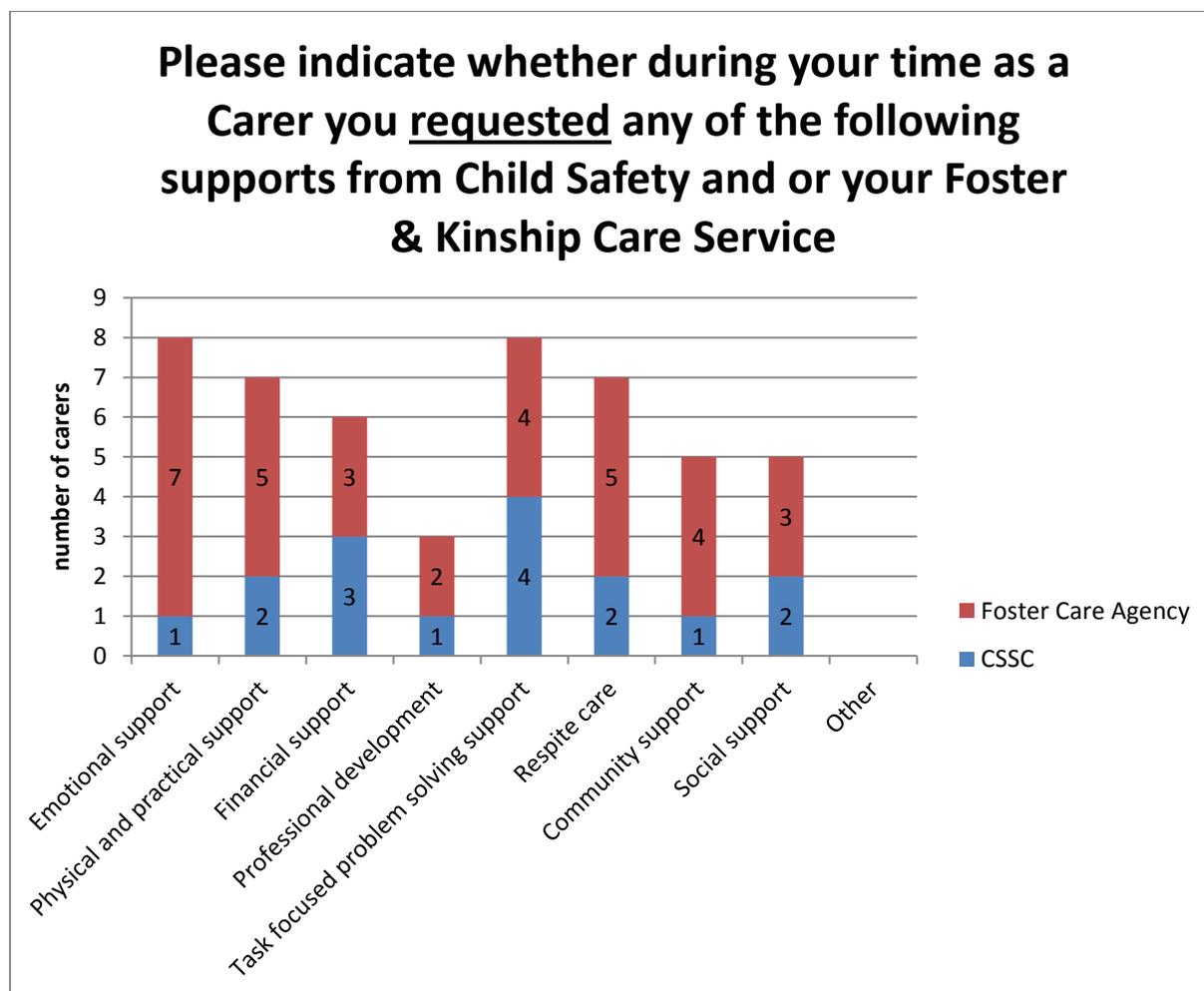
Which of the following persons did you usually have contact with?

■ Child Safety Service Centre Managers
 ■ Child Safety Team Leaders
 ■ Child Safety Officers
 ■ Child Safety Support Officers (family support worker)
 ■ Child Safety Youth Worker
 ■ Foster and Kinship Care Service Workers
 ■ None of the above



Question: The Experience of Caring – Support

This section addresses the experience of caring and support received.



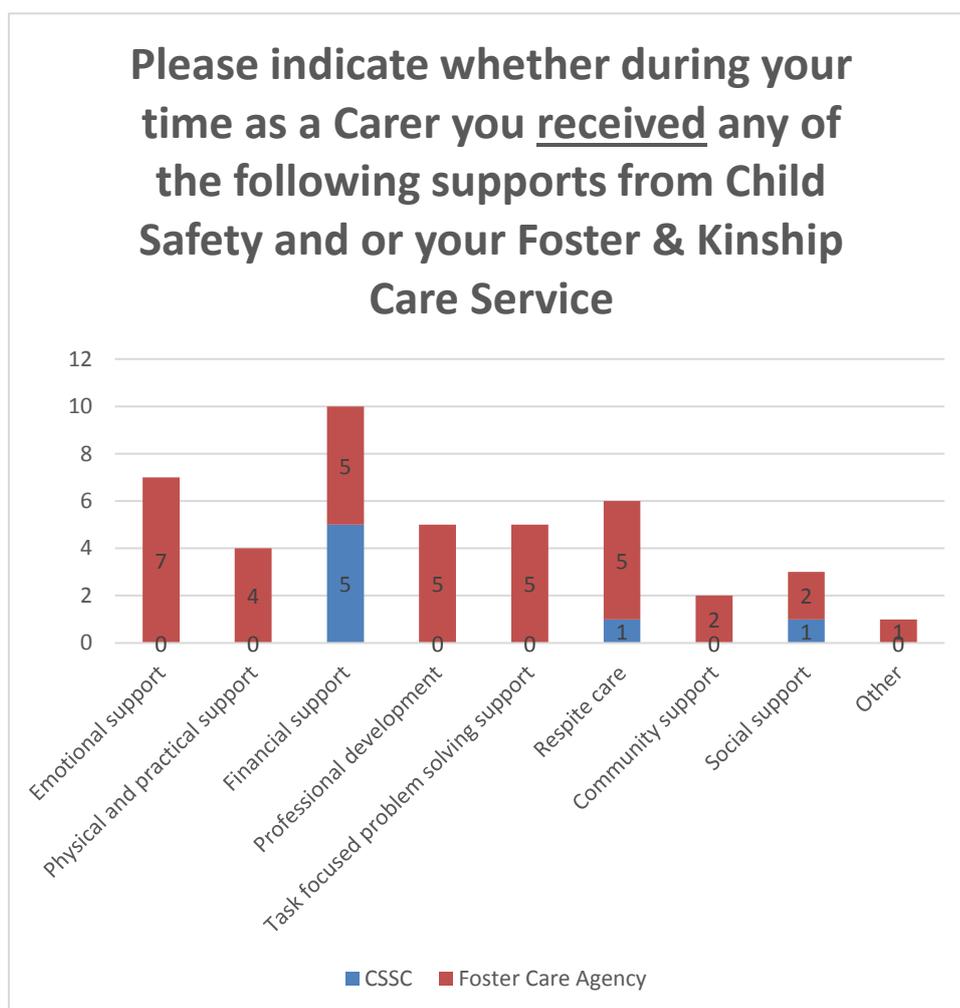
Carers were asked to provide responses to two questions:

- Did they seek or receive any other form of support, and where was this from?
- Were there other supports you would have liked access to?

Below are the responses supplied:

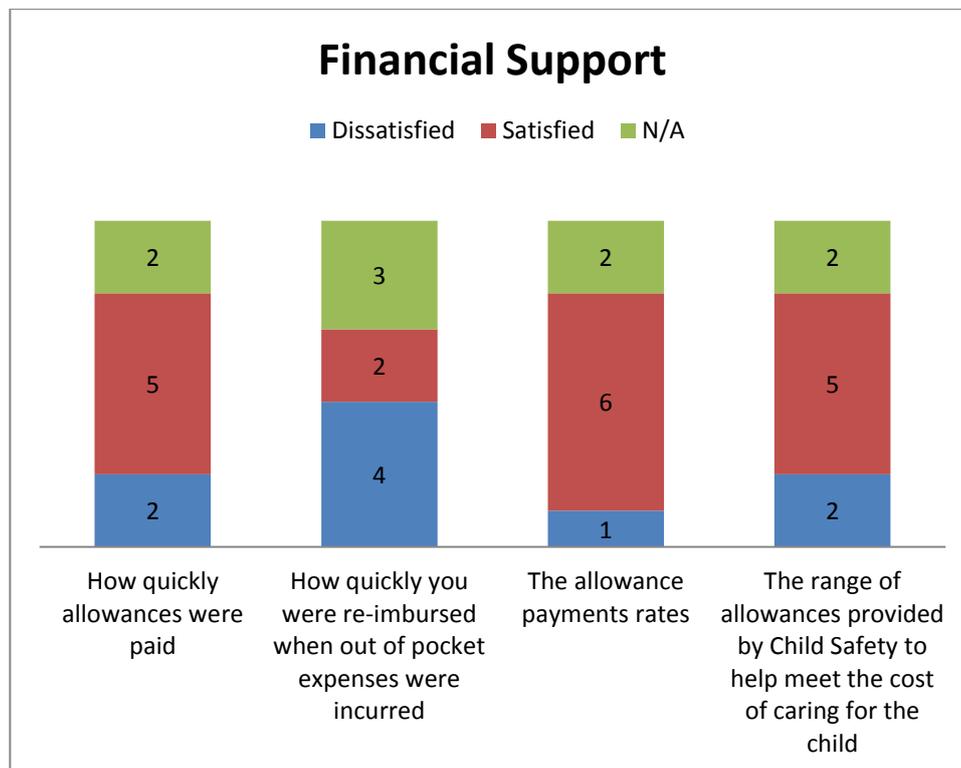
- Reimbursement for school uniforms as asked to drop child to school who had no uniform and refused to go without one took 8 weeks to get reimburse
- Main support was Evolve psychiatrist services
- Support from Church Community
- Attempts were made with child safety to clarify restrictions on family access, addresses prohibited, supervision, and school info, phone contact frequency with parents etc and for this to be sent in writing i.e. email. We didn't receive the placement agreement until the start of the 4th week which covered a lot of these queries and would have been much better to have had soon after the placement commencing
- No

- No
- Family and indigenous youth group leaders.
- No
- None
- Timely respite, early training, returned calls emails and all communication taken seriously by child safety
- Many of the queries to the child safety officer needed to go through a Team Leader which was frustrating and delayed information, decisions or advice flowing in a timely manner
- No



Question: The Experience of Caring – Financial

Experience of caring in relation to financial support.

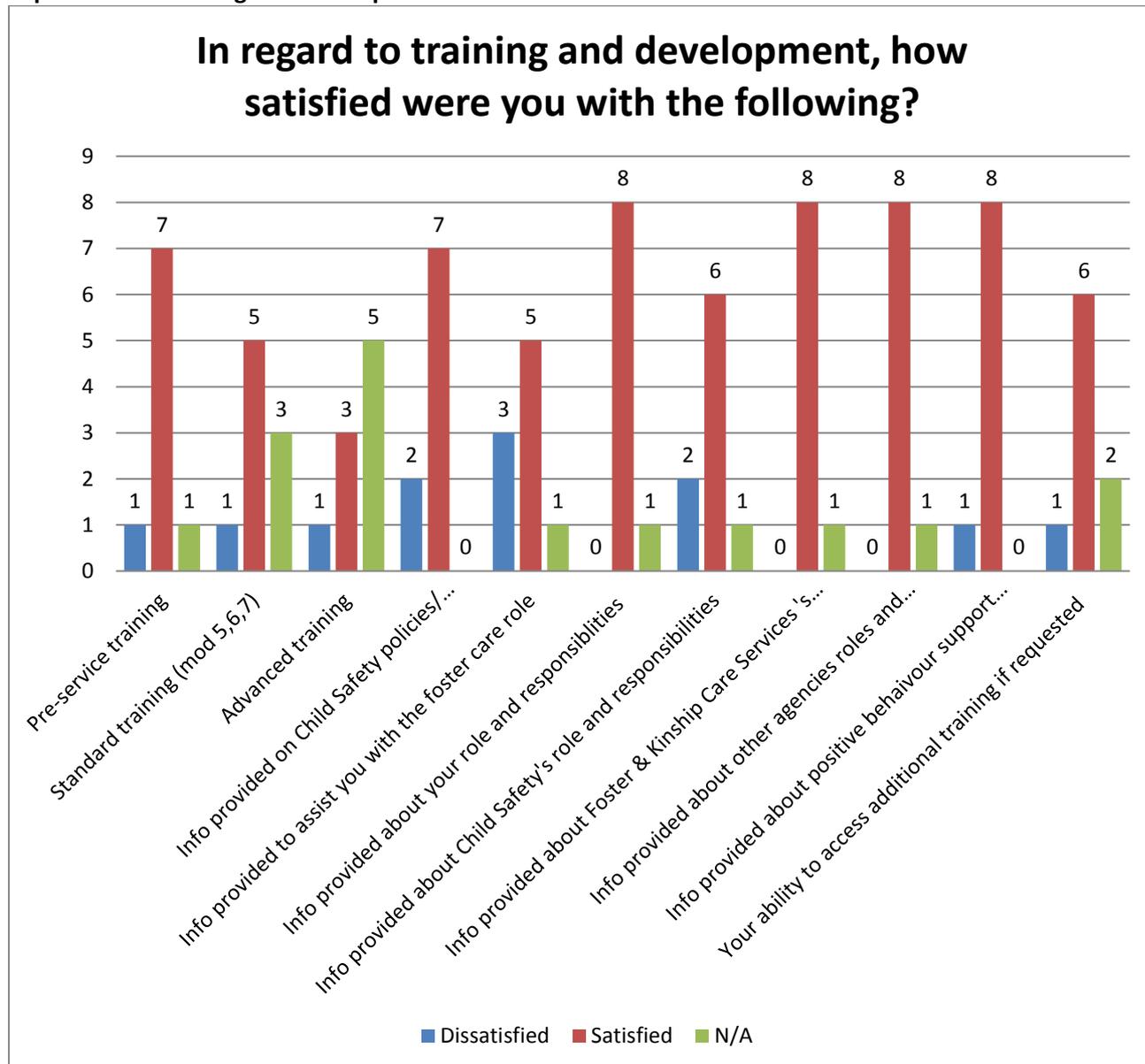


Responses from Carers in relation to financial support:

- Near the end I was dissatisfied with caring for a child with complex needs and only being paid the fortnightly caring allowance.
- took 8 weeks to be reimburse for a school uniform
- Allowance cut without notifying carers

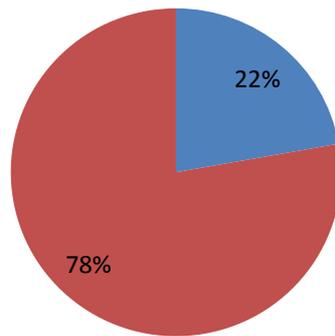
Question: The Experience of Caring – Training and Professional Development

Experience to training and development.



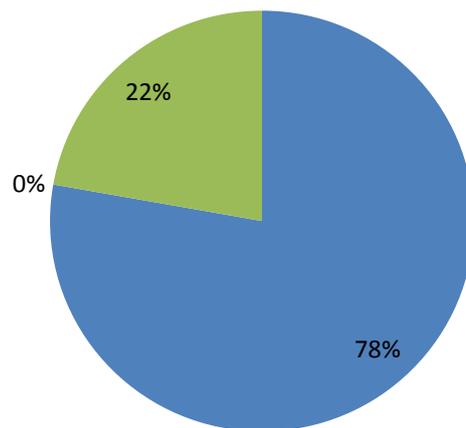
Have you attended any training in the last 12 months

■ Yes ■ No



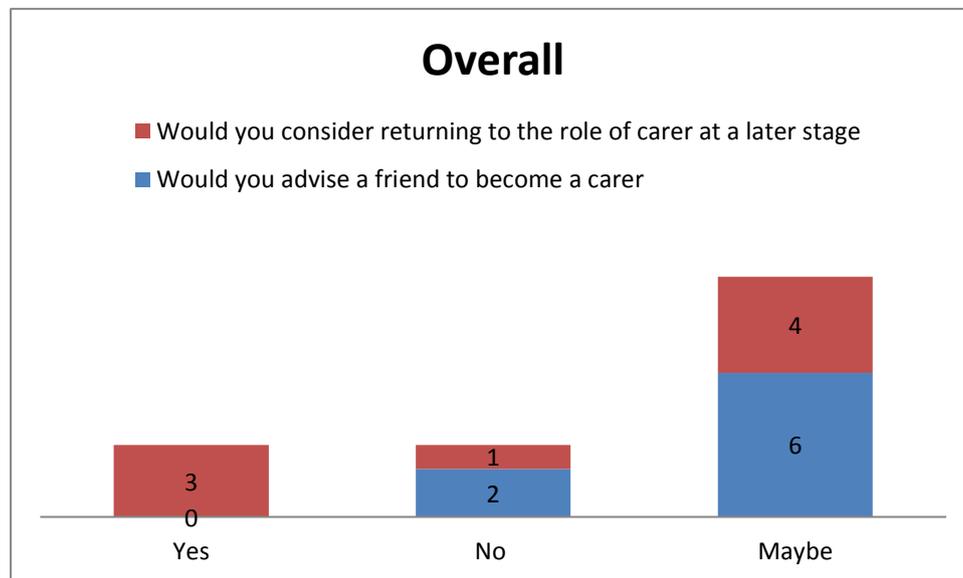
If you were approved as a Foster Carer, was there a Foster Care Agreement in place?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



Questions: Overall Experiences

Overall experiences.



Responses in relation to returning to the role as a Carer at a later stage and advising a friend to become a Carer:

- Maybe in the future after I have had a family, but it's a weak maybe.

Carers were asked to provide comments in relation to their overall experience as a Carer, the responses were as follows:

Q2. Did your experiences of providing care meet the expectation you had when you decided to become a Carer?

- With timely support we could have succeeded

Q3. What were the most challenging aspects of being a Carer?

- Very quick turnaround (same day) that child services realised provisional kinship care arrangement could be considered that child was transferred into care. Big adjustment for all parties and with limited detail or explanations supplied to the child on the situation.
- Dealing with false accusations made by children in my care to get their own way
- Working with child safety working with the system
- Working with children with different behaviours
- the process to become a carer
- Dealing with child safety mentality and the uninformed intervention they go about without consulting the carer
- Not being backed up by the department
- Dealing with the child behavioural issues

Q4. What was the most positive aspect of being a Carer?

- Felt that we made a positive difference to child's life during a very difficult time for them. Provided with a safe, loving and stable environment for 5 weeks in care and saw improvements in behaviour, attitude, confidence and social interactions.
- Caring for children that appreciated us.
- Seeing the children achieve
- becoming guardian of a young person
- children wanting to come back to my carer
- Loving and being able to help heal my beautiful boy.
- my case worker really fought for what i came into fostering for
- Doing my best as a carer to provide the best care possible for the child

Q5. What helped you feel supported in your role as a Carer?

- Read all general information supplied, speaking to Foster and Kinship Care case worker.
- agency support
- Working with the agency
- My husband
- carer support visits, my family
- My family and friends
- my case worker
- Had support from families and friends.

Q6. What could be improved to assist Carers in their role?

- Early provision of placement agreement by Child Safety Officer. More transparency and communication regarding where the court ordered assessment is heading so decisions for the child can be made e.g. after hour school care / vacation care bookings, adjustment to work hours etc.
- Child safety have a more realistic understanding of the challenges we face.
- System needs a big overhaul
- Someone to listen and be genuine
- Process to become a carer needs to be look at as it took 8 months for mine and I was a priority case and it still took 8 months
- That the case managers actually read the files and get to know the people they are making huge decisions about
- more staff for the department, so they are actually able to help you in a timely manner, rather simple things taking such a long time, which as a carer was very frustrating
- More support from the agency

Q7. Do you have any additional comments, suggestions or concerns?

- From our experience I felt that the Child Safety Department is under resourced which is concerning given the role they are undertaking for the community. I also do not feel the child was given adequate support in terms of social worker explanation of what was occurring in age appropriate language, he said the night he was removed from mother he was worried he would be sleeping at that office for the night and no one said what was happening or where he was going. When being transferred to our care, when asked the child safety officer said no one had explained things to him yet which I felt went against the standards of care info for the child that I read about when a child is taken into custody of CSD. The significant delay in receiving a placement agreement and delays in CSO returning calls, emails was also evidence of this.
- Child safety should be more supportive of carers and not treat us as if we are unimportant.
- This wasn't planned or expected and we didn't ever think that this would happen and to have two harm reports in a matter of eight weeks for the same child with a new CSO.
- CS is in the legal role as a parent. Their practices are not in my experience responsible or caring and they have too much power which can corrupt
- No
- No