

CARER EXIT SURVEY

South West Region

2017-2018



FOSTER CARE QUEENSLAND

Contents

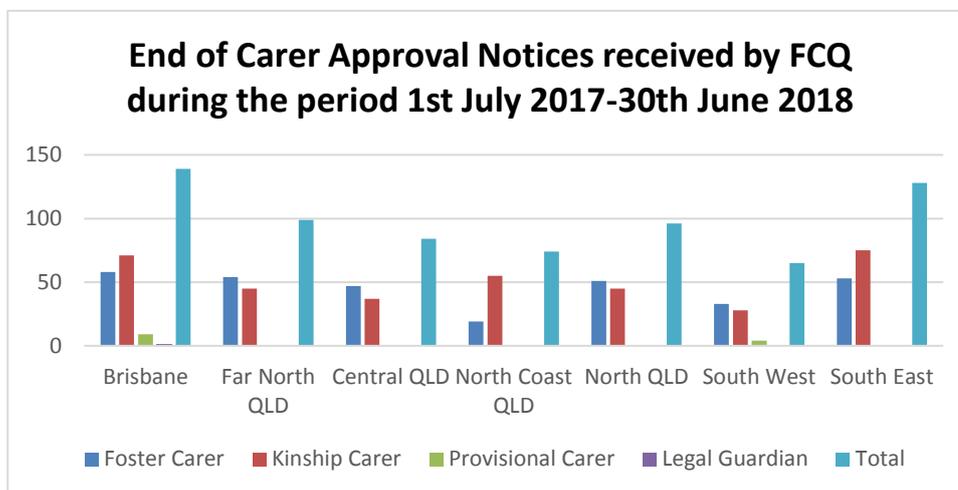
Executive Summary.....	67
Summary South West Region	73
Question: About You.....	74
Question: About You As A Carer	76
Question: Reasons for Discontinuing as a Foster/Kinship Carer	78
Question: The Experience of Caring.....	86
Question: The Experience of Caring – Communication	87
Question: The Experience of Caring - Support.....	93
Question: The Experience of Caring – Financial Support.....	95
Question: The Experience of Caring – Training and Professional Development	97
Question: Overall Experience	99

Executive Summary

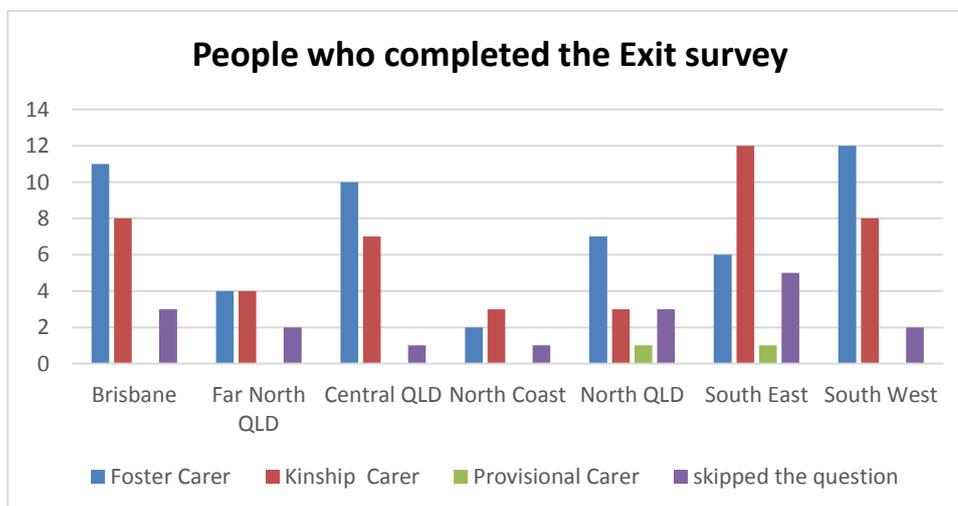
Information relating to End of Carer Approval Notices

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 years 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 Carers 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 asks 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 follows 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 emails past Carers if this was an option, having been provided with the email addresses in 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.

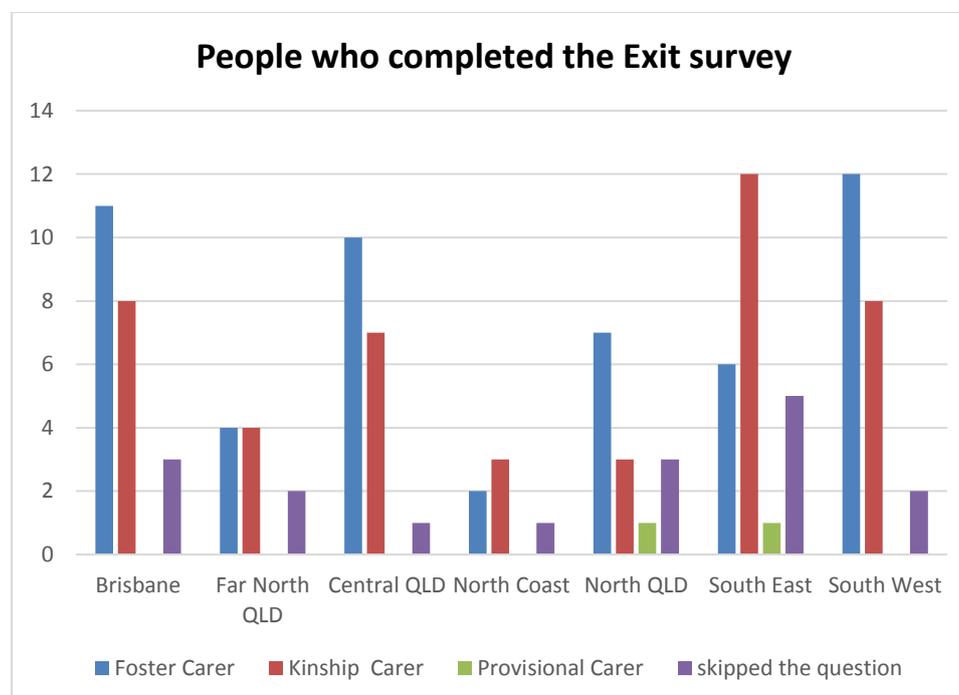
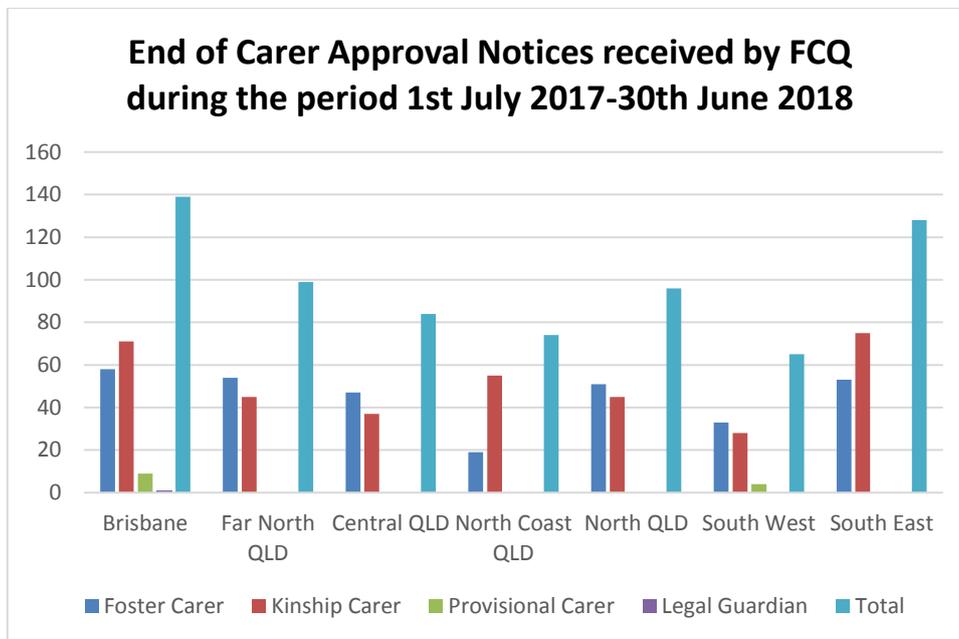
It was acknowledged by the Brisbane Region in March 2018 that they had reviewed their data and failed to provide FCQ with all the required End of Carer Approval Notices, approximately 118. It was agreed that they would provide all additional information to FCQ. As part of the notifications that FCQ receive, 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 does not receive all the End of Carer Notices that should be provided to FCQ to give people the opportunity 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 continue to receive a number of End of Carer Approval Notices, however, 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 positive 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 Carer roles and responsibilities
- Information provided about Foster and Kinship Care Services roles 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.

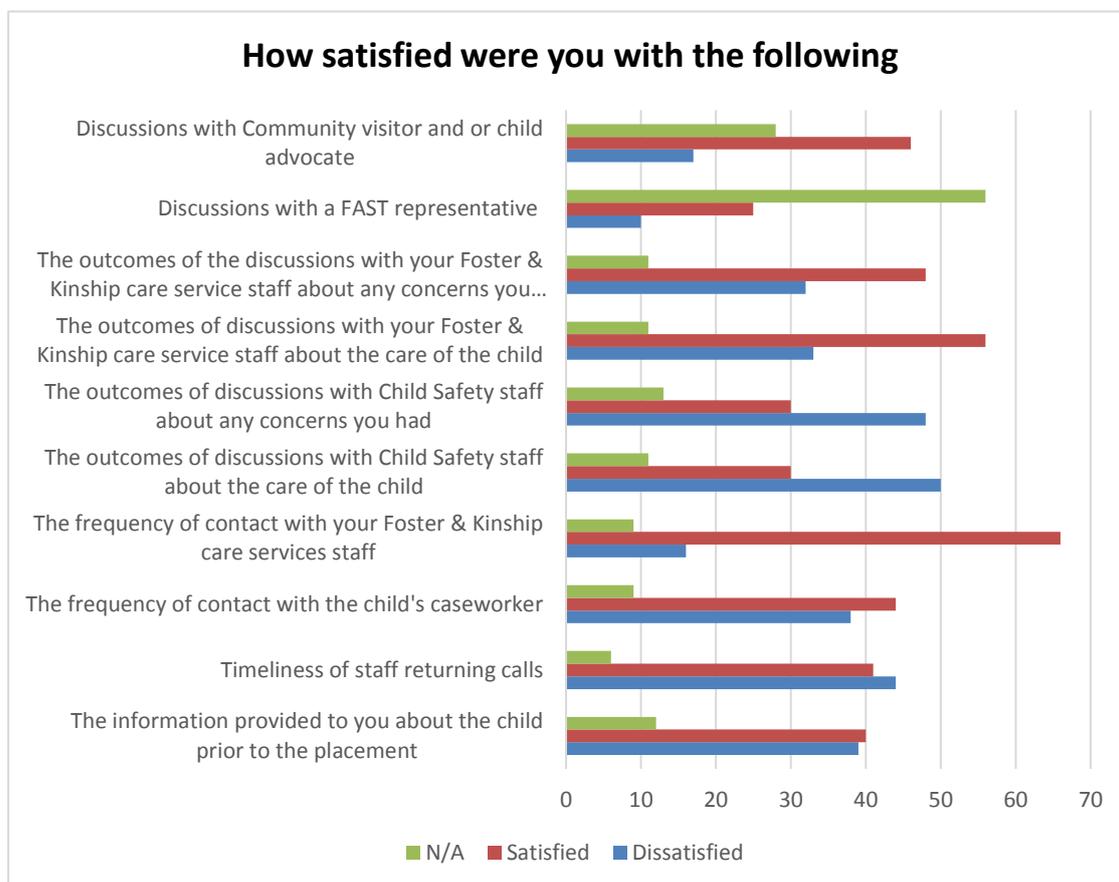
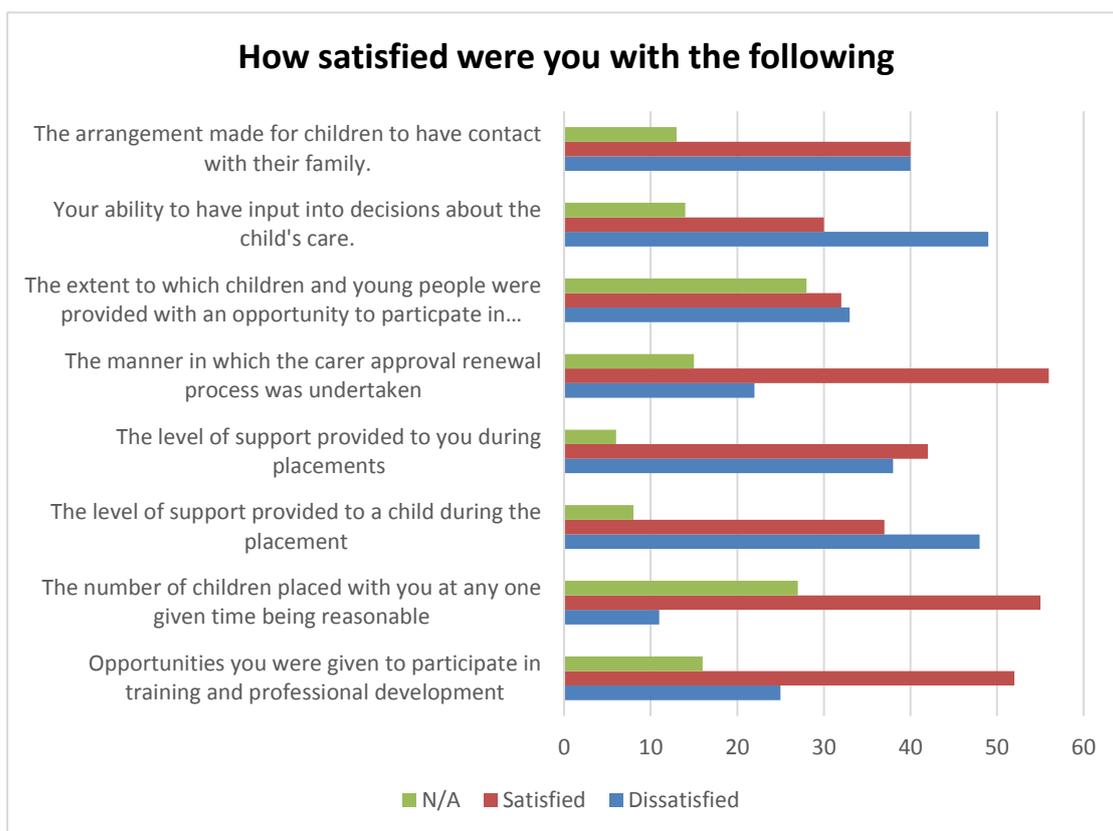
Overall across the state, there were similarities in terms of negative feedback provided, listed below are common themes from information provided in the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 reports;

- 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

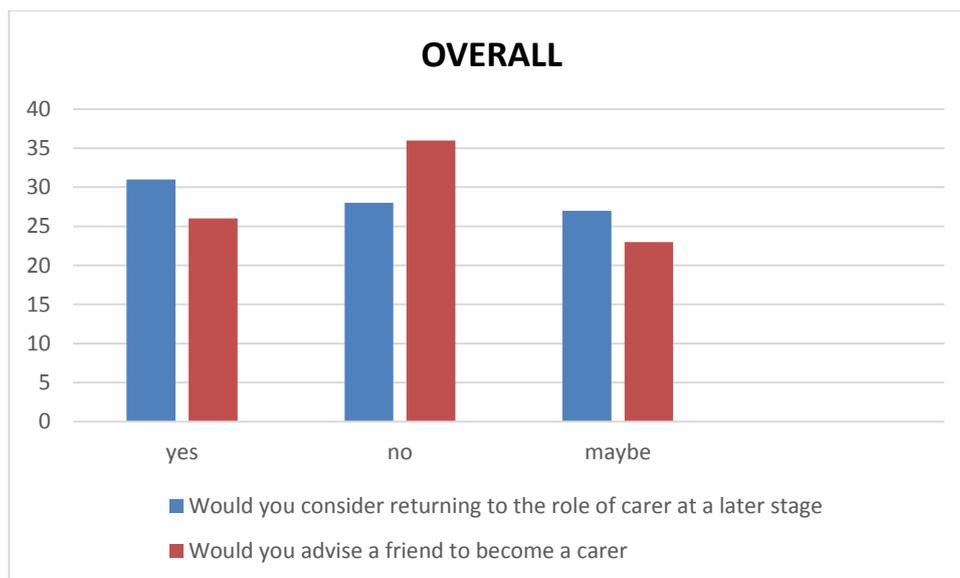
- The arrangement made for children to have contact with their family, the response overall was equal with 50% feeling satisfied and 50% feeling dissatisfied in relation to where this was applicable.
- Your ability to have input into decisions about the child's care, the response indicated for the regions 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 would they 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.

Completed by:
Marijka Kelly
Recruitment and Exit Co-ordinator

Presented by:
Bryan Smith
Executive Director

23 July 2018

Summary South West Region

FCQ received a total of 685 End of carer approvals during the period of 1st July 2017-30th June 2018. 65 (9.4%) of the 685 approvals were received from the South West region. All 65 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 65 End of Carer Approvals consisted of;
- 1 identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 6 identifying as Aboriginal
- 54 identifying as neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander
- 1 identifying as Torres Strait Islander
- 3 End of carer approvals did not provide this information.
- The end of carer approvals also identified that from the 65;
 - 28 identified as Kinship Carers
 - 33 identified as Foster Carers
 - 4 identified as Provisional Carers

There were 22 people (33.8%) from the south West 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 65 End of Carer approval received, only:

- 12 Foster Carers completed the survey out of 33 (36.3%)
- 8 Kinship Carers completed the survey out of 28 (28.5%)
- 0 provisional carers completed the survey
- 2 people skipped this question

The 22 people who completed the survey provided the following information;

- 12 identified as Foster Carers
- 8 identified as Kinship Carers
- 2 people skipped this question

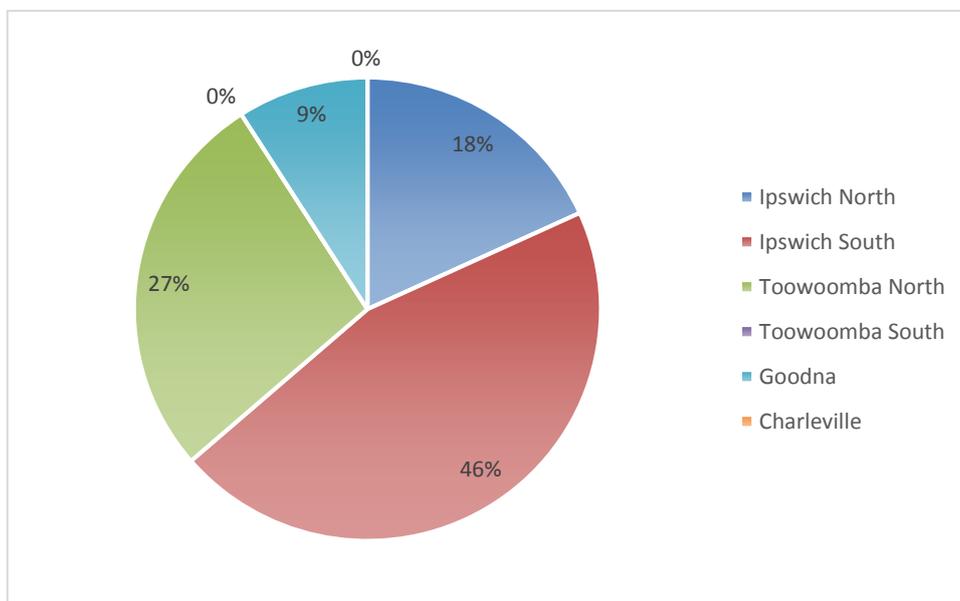
20 identified as neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander

1 identified as Aboriginal

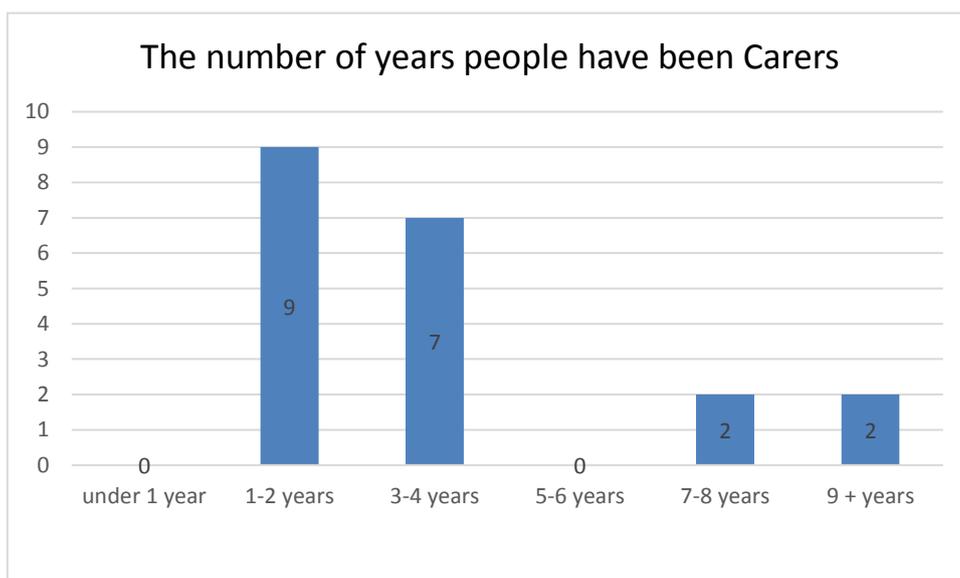
1 identified as other (Migrant)

Question: About You

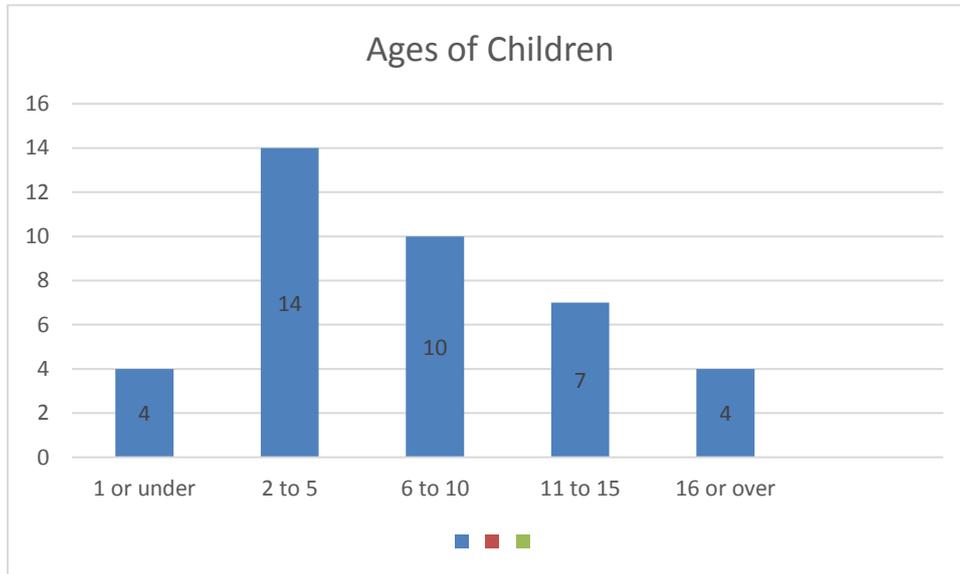
Information identifies which child safety office the person was attached to while they were Foster Carers.



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.

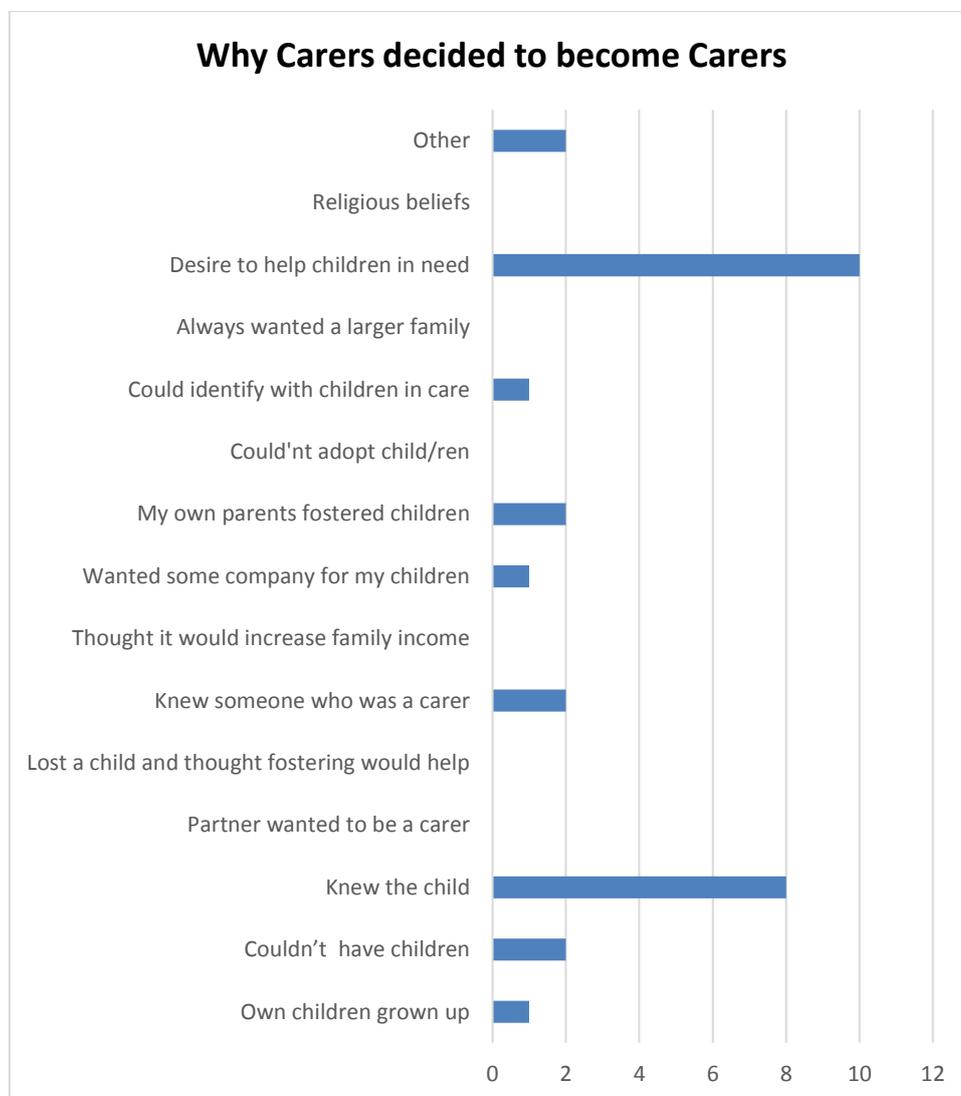


The information provided also evidences the amount of children the person/persons have provided care to.



Question: About You as A 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 chart.

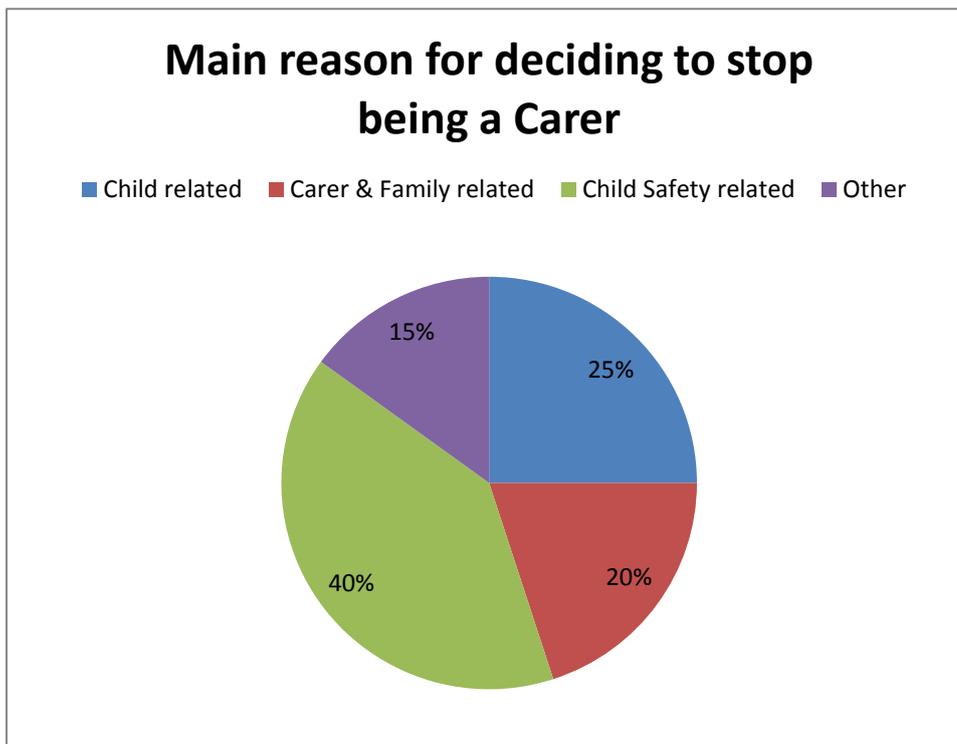
- skill base and training in disability child safety PBSP
- Worked in sector
- I was involved with the child through the Pyjama Foundation (her Pyjama Angel). When her foster parents of approximately 7 years could no longer continue to care for her there was a possibility, because of her age, that she might go into group housing. My husband & I, although too old and with too many commitments to take her permanently, decided to become her kinship carers for her so that we could take her into our home on a regular basis

and provide respite for her. We considered her part of our family and treated her as our niece or granddaughter.

- Wanting to give children the opportunity to have a wonderful upbringing and experience all the positives of being a child in a loving and safe environment.
- I worked in out of home care and saw the gaps for respite carers and the challenges that were faced by our carers without ongoing respite placement and wanted to support carers by providing respite and to be supporting young people who were in a primary placement to have a home they could go to have a break as well. I wanted to see change in people ways of thinking around young people having other trusted adults in their lives who they could feel safe with away from their "family/foster" home
- My granddaughter came into my care August 2016 - family arrangement. My grandson came into my care mid-January 2016 and that is when I became kinship carer for both children. The next two granddaughters (who had been staying with their father) were put into my care in last week January 2016 in time to start school - these two were never under CS even though they were siblings.
- We originally did respite care back in 2008-2010, and then stopped for a while for personal reasons and then reapplied to be short term carers in 2013, approval through beginning of 2014, as our children were slightly older we thought we had the capacity in our home and hearts to care for some little ones.
- The child was placed in boarding school which was an inappropriate long term situation. She was grossly misunderstood and the school was incapable of catering to the needs of such a traumatized child. This little girl had absolutely nowhere else to go.
- I became a carer for my nephews and niece as they are in care.

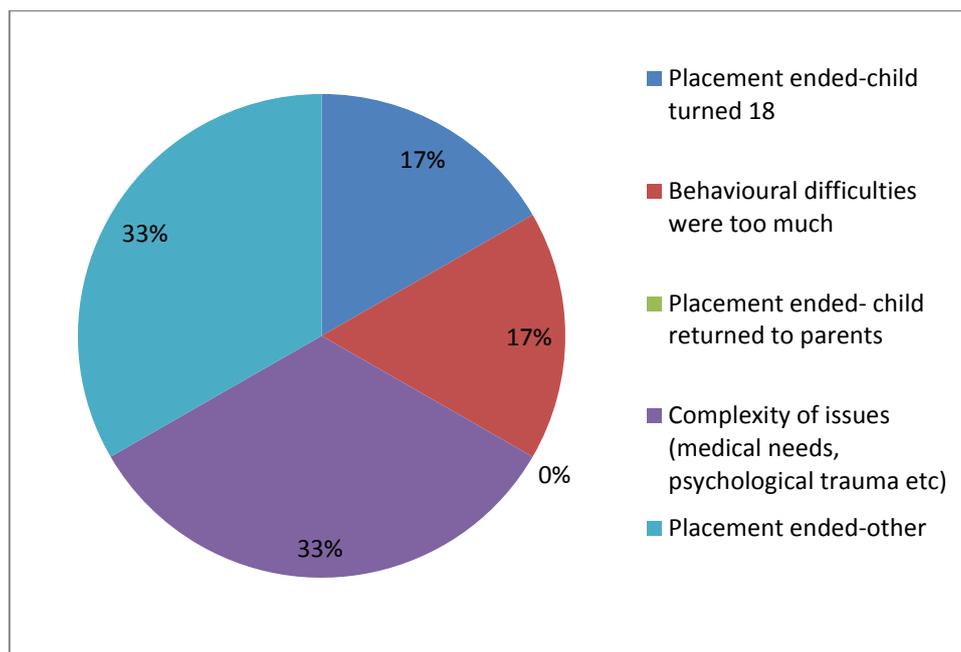
Question: Reasons for Discontinuing as a Foster/Kinship Carer

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 respondent answered that they ceased being carers due to child related reasons, they are asked to expand on the reasons, as follows.

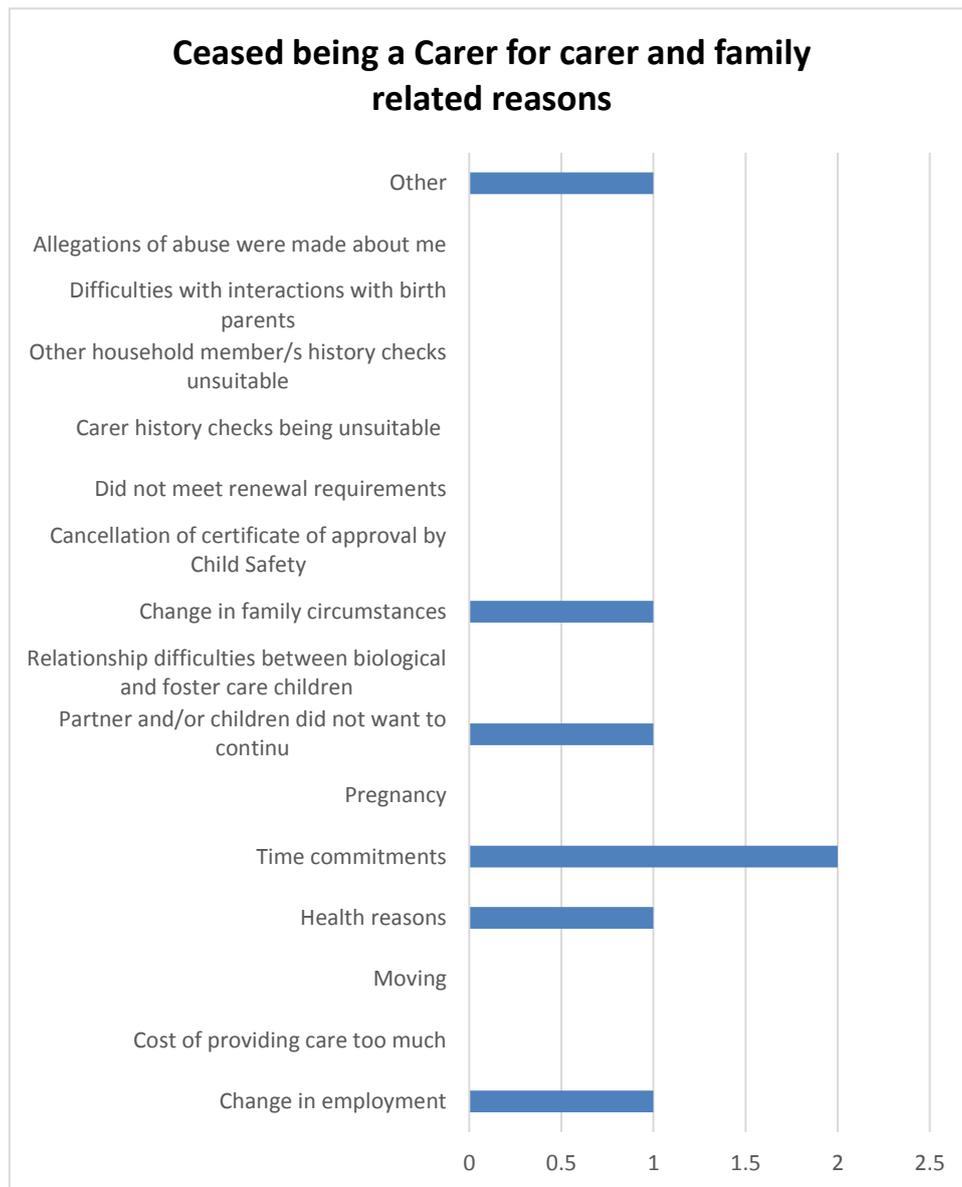
- The child was intimidated by her new foster mother into breaking of all ties with us.
- Child stopped communicating with us
- Lack of Support
- My commitments for my own biological children and their needs increased.
- most of the above were identified but not supported which had a significant impact on our family
- Communication difficulties with case workers.
- Harm report

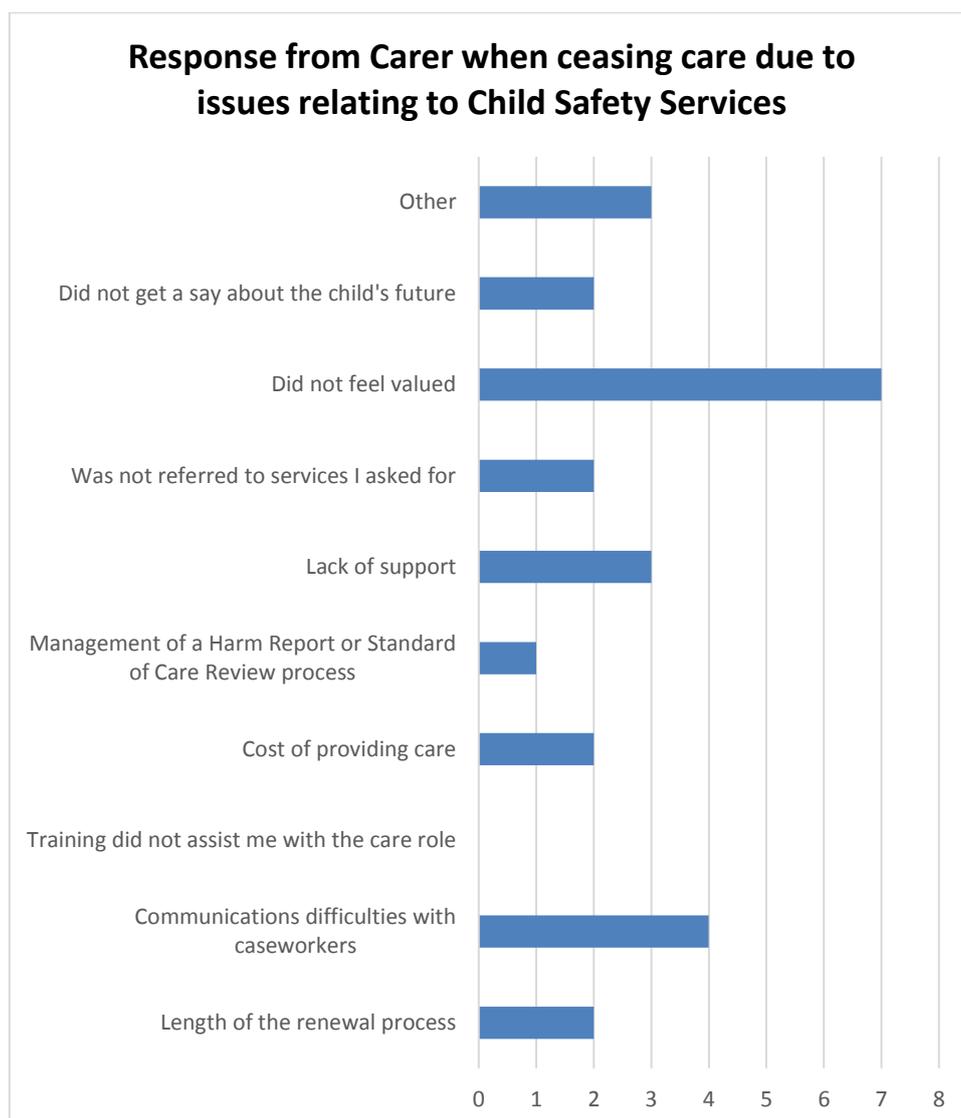


Below are extracts of comments that were made by people completing the survey in relation to this question.

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

- We feel the loss of these young people in our lives because of circumstances and decisions made
- This was for the brother and sister only
- Basically it came down to the fact we weren't supported with the needs that he had.
- Because we would not adhere to personal invasive requests wanted by child safety
- The threat of harm to our children (stab them in their sleep) and the intention to hurt herself was too much for our family to continue. We were not given any support in dealing with these extremely complex situations.
- Placement ended - child returned to parents.





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

- Police and FCQ supported us at Children’s Tribunal in 2004. Child was abused for 4 months before being removed. Step dad was later jailed
- Needing to take time off work to attend appointments and no provision of regular respite care
- exclusion form decisions
- Child Safety impacted my families
- Life. We were extremely disappointed that we could not continue or have the opportunity to even be foster carers.... We were left feeling really devalued and unworthy from comments made and the actual process we were succumbed to.... The approval process took nearly twelve months and although we felt that we had a lot to offer a foster child given our skill base and a stable family unit but although we understood the process of matching found it difficult to understand why in the following 12 months a match couldn’t be found. During this time three placements were suggested, the first child was suggested to us which was in total conflict with our criteria, this we had in place due to our son’s disability and our work in the

field to ensure we don't suffer burn out. I would think these are reasonable expectations to protect us, ensure our child's needs are met and most importantly a stable, positive environment that is likely sustainable for a foster placement. When we brought to the case worker at that point in time attention during the suggested placement offer that it didn't match our criteria we met with the response "well what is your criteria? What are you expecting" I asked her to check her files.... A further call was made two weeks later with a proposed match which we were told dates the placement would commence in a further following two weeks' time which we used the time to orient our son to bought some things to help settle the child in i.e. we have popcorn movie night and we all have our own tubs to make it special etc... I made many calls leaving a couple of messages closer to the time along with emails cc others in just in case of holidays et... but had no response. the day of placement came and went with a no show on a Saturday to receive a call the following Monday informing us it wasn't going ahead as the agency hadn't heard back from the department which happens sometimes..... well you can imagine the impact on my family.... Following this experience the only other offer we received some months later I think we must have hurried into given twelve months intake process and the above experiences.... In doing so we were offered a placement that was totally not suitable and broke down within a couple of days devastating for all concerned you can imagine.... On my debrief with a departmental clinician found that this child was placed inappropriately and my guilt and doubt removed as reinforcement was given to my expectations "criteria" being reasonable action for all concerned. This experience creates a cloud and confusion for us given the demand for quality foster carers.... And very disappointing that we didn't have an opportunity to provide a positive placement for a child in need.....

- I didn't agree with the decisions made for two of the young people I provided long term respite and or placement for and didn't not feel valued in my role as I was not even advised of major changes and life traumas that were ongoing for these young people. they were just taken away and I didn't even get the opportunity to say goodbye let alone the young people having another trusted adult in their lives taken away from them
- We do have unique needs given our teenage bio son passed away from cancer in 2014, and gave plenty of notice about needing respite for his anniversary this year, however it wasn't made a priority and caused additional stress. The little one in our care had very high needs and was super anxious and screamed a lot! I am studying part time. The department did not offer support or follow through on support requests and generally made us feel they were unable to support our needs which meant we were unable to support the little one in our care's needs.
- We had a harm report recorded against us in Oct 16 for a permanent child we had, he was removed from our care. Then when we did the harm report interview the interviewer twisted our words & we had to go back & do a few changes. Then we were found against for the report. We went through an intense interview for renewal from an outside assessor as child safety put us on hold. Then we waited for months for our assessment to be checked, only to be told they wanted a list of demands for re-approval. We agreed to 3 of the 5 they wanted, as we feel the other 2 were personally invasive. Our renewal date was 30 June, we were still waiting for an answer in August. After a couple of back & forth with the department via our agency and their unwillingness to give us a 2nd chance we resigned as Foster Carers. We feel that we were already judged after the harm report so no matter what we did they were never going to reapprove us. We would have liked to have known this earlier so that we didn't go through all the heartache & invasive interview process for the renewal & subsequent discrediting verbally from child safety via our agency. At no time did we receive any written information for our renewal outcome & this has left me bitter against the department. I have

no kind words in regard to the process that we were put through & the lack of a timely response from child safety. I would actively discourage anyone that would like to be a foster carer after the treatment we received from child safety.

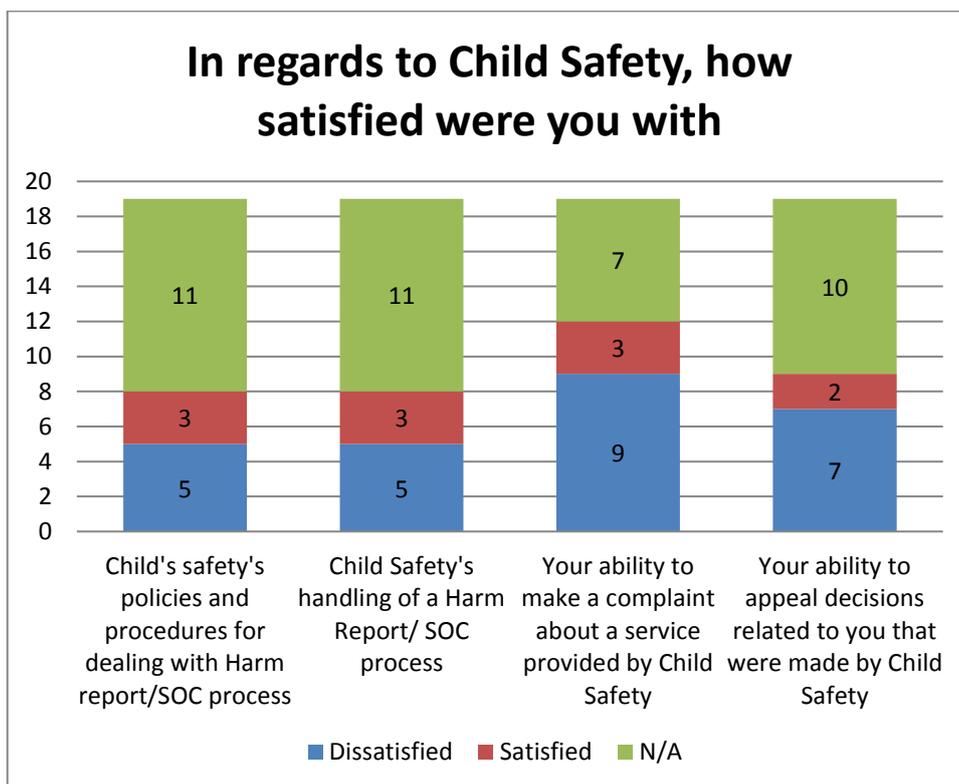
- A combination of each of those items. Actions of the child, absolutely no support from Child Safety and effects & threats to our own children.
- Agency issues
- The department decided to cancel my being a carer
- The child is under long term care of the state. The Department was not prepared to help us seek long term help for her trauma/abuse issues. No one in the government sector wants to fix the immediate issues they handball it to the next area and are only focussed on their budgets and not the child. This little girl was suicidal, threatened to harm our children and any avenues we suggested for long term help and respite to the department they declined. She had previously harmed a small child (on a couple of occasions) yet the department were prepared to send her to a single mother with a small baby for respite rather than a camp with similarly aged children to save a few hundred dollars on their budgets. We were not skilled enough in her trauma issues to help her. She was requiring full time help and we were unable to attend our jobs in order to help her. Our children also took a major back seat and were missing out on parenting from us as there was no support in place for us or the child in our care. Lots of things were promised and touted that were coming but nothing ever came. Different agencies touched base saying they would come and then would call in sick, cancel, not show up. All of which ended with us in a desperate situation which ultimately failed this little girl. The system is so extremely flawed.
- Agency did not co-operate as part of care team
- The new foster mother had indicated to us that she would not allow the child to come to us for respite. There was no point in continuing being registered as her kinship carers, as the child will be 18 in October and the upset of the breakdown of relationship was affecting my emotional health.
- I had to deal with rude Carers at times and did not receive support from my agency as I would do respite and some of the Carers very VERY unprofessional and I took what we did very seriously.
- I also got fed up with and do not understand why every foster child I met had been in so many foster homes
- Child payments reduced although he became more and more complex mentally. More to pay for. Not helped by losing pay to go to appointments for the child and extra cost.
- Financially we could not support the child that was in our care as we did not receive an establishment or set cost fees. We also did not receive a complex care allowance although these needs were identified. As the additional support required me to have a lot of time off work the financial impact of this was too much.
- Reasons relating to the children-aren't we then traumatising young people once again when they establish a relationship with a respite/carer and then take them away and not give them the opportunity to know that we care about them, that they have become a part of our families regardless of the behaviours, needs or diagnosis that they belong and we value them. Reasons relating to my family- even though my children are all adults they too felt the loss and grief from not being able to say goodbye and to know that their mother was angry and sad for the young people let alone the loss she felt from their absence. Why would I do this to my own children regardless of age when I have never wanted any child in care to feel that. The department showed no value in me in my caring role, my agency were amazing and supportive and my SOC was brilliant and it sat with me to decide if I could support young vulnerable people if I had no faith in the "system or the department" Completing this survey

has reminded me that I still feel so many things for this whole process and the very challenging and confronting decision to stop being a carer. Who misses out, in my opinion only the young people I cared for and the future young people I may have cared for who will never had that opportunity

- Child Safety impacted my family's life.
- As explained already, and additionally, being only 1 yr old, the paediatrician said she was hesitant to slap any labels on him just yet, but at the very least it is clear he has attachment disorder. He had a number of other things she wanted to follow up on, including an eye specialist appointment which the gp said the little ones can go blind if it's not dealt with early on, but he's still waiting over a year for that appointment at LCCH despite there being a child safety department down in that actual hospital! GP wrote a letter recommending meningococcal vaccination, which I submitted to child safety and attempted to follow up a few times, to no avail. We were going to a grieving parents retreat down south and approval to take the little one didn't come through until 6pm the night before which was disgusting given the large amount of notice and chasing up I did for it. CSO have I correct information numerous times that needed clarification or correction then she left and he had no CSO for a while, and then he got allocated to a CSO but no one informed us. As soon as department and agency realised we would be resigning as carers after he left our care they pretty much ignored my communication with them despite me trying to communicate best interests of the child information for support the new carer would require. The child care Centre he attended 2 days while with us was disgusted that the department would allow such a high needs child to be placed with a single childless woman, and she contacted me only 3 weeks after having him saying she didn't think she could keep caring for him due to such intense behaviours. The department were looking at moving him from us to a placement that his kin was in care with however the behind the scenes manager to manager conversations weren't successful and it was decided the region wouldn't take his case on at that time, so he was placed locally in this region again for now.
- Whilst we enjoyed being supported by the agency, we felt that we were never given the age group that we had requested.
- This was not my choice it was the department who decided this, they were not very supportive during the time I was a carer. I was lucky to get them on the phone to discuss any concerns I had.
- The Department instead of dealing with the disagreement and misunderstanding between us & the new foster mother by arranging mediation, merely solved the problem in their minds by changing the child's CSO. The Department and the Support Officer have allowed the new foster mother to intimidate the child into not only breaking off ties with us, but also with her sister and with her friends.
- We also got victimized when we took DOCS to Children's Tribunal. I was also bullied for a few years at Goodna. Back then (not sure about now) it was all about the parents needs not the child
- Intake process took twelve months
- I have answered this
- Lies and Cover ups
- Did not receive an outcome of our renewal or management of harm report was not adequate.
- They started out positive when they are trying to get you on as a carer but then all communication ceases until they want something from you. They are only focussed on budgets and not on the child at all. It is honestly bureaucracy gone mad!
- The department needs to STOP pandering and start putting these precious children permanently into the hands of families who are prepared to raise them in a wonderful way

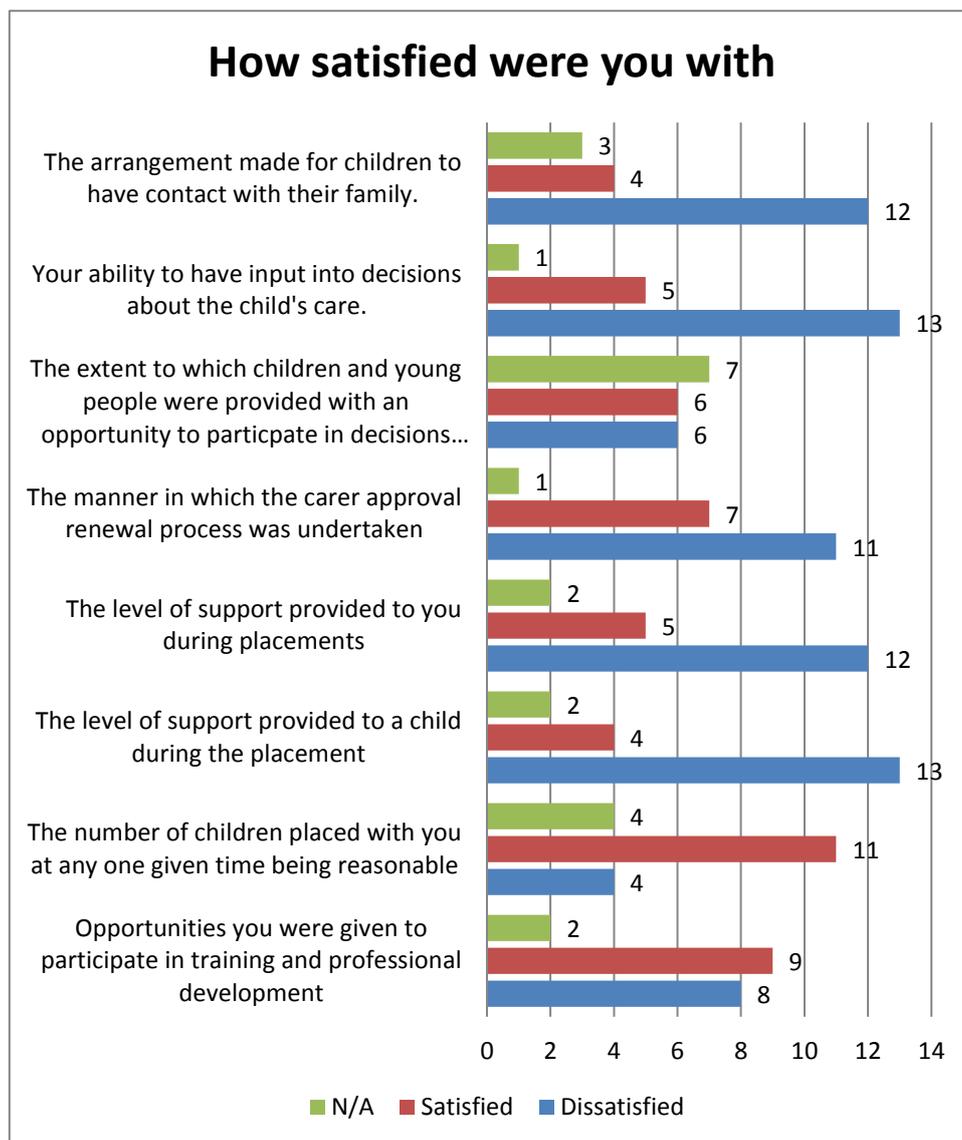
instead of constantly allowing the needs of their irresponsible parents to have most says. These children deserve that.

- Lack of Support
- Child went back to mum, I was only approved for my great granddaughter.



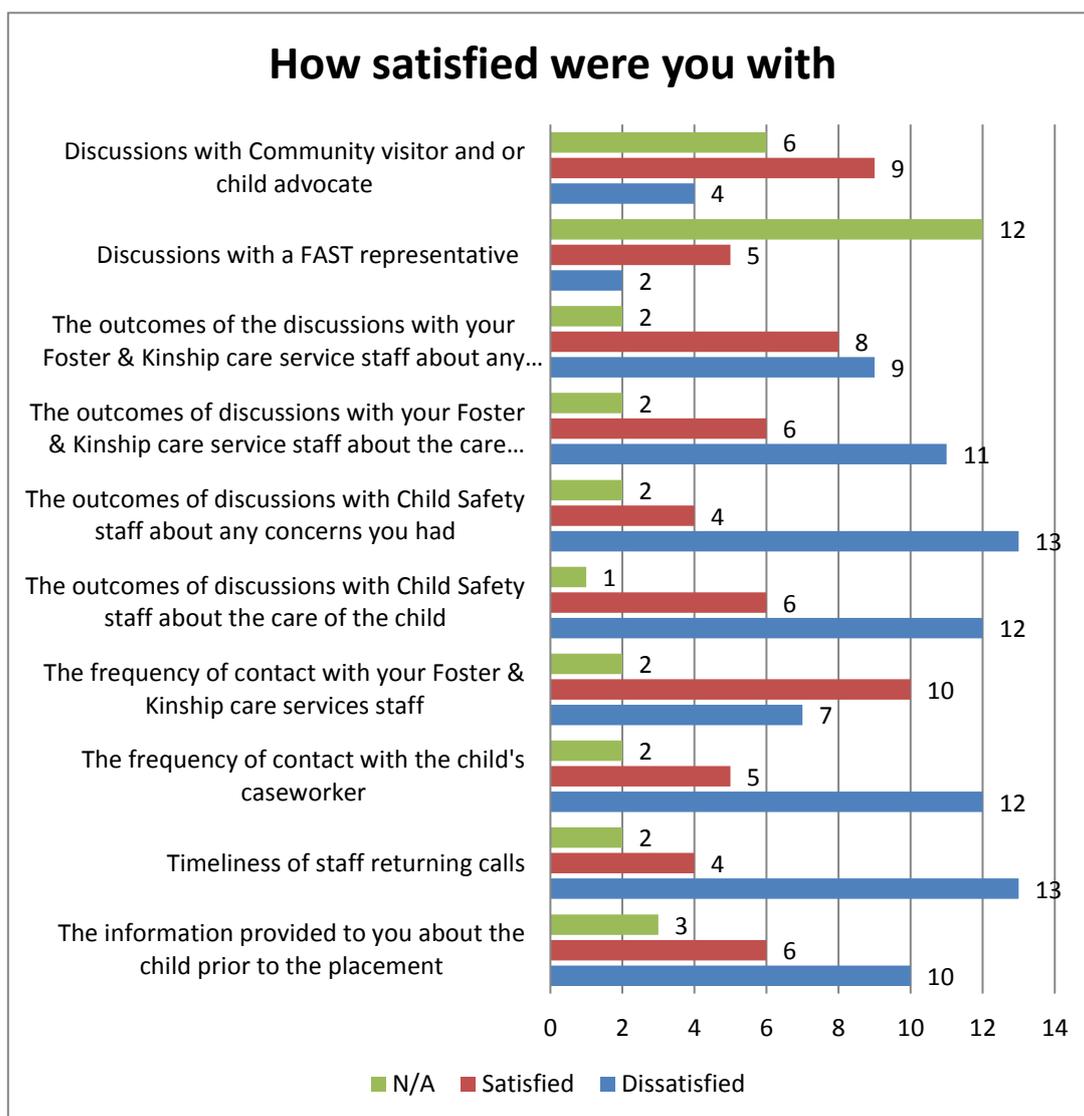
Question: The Experience of Caring

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.



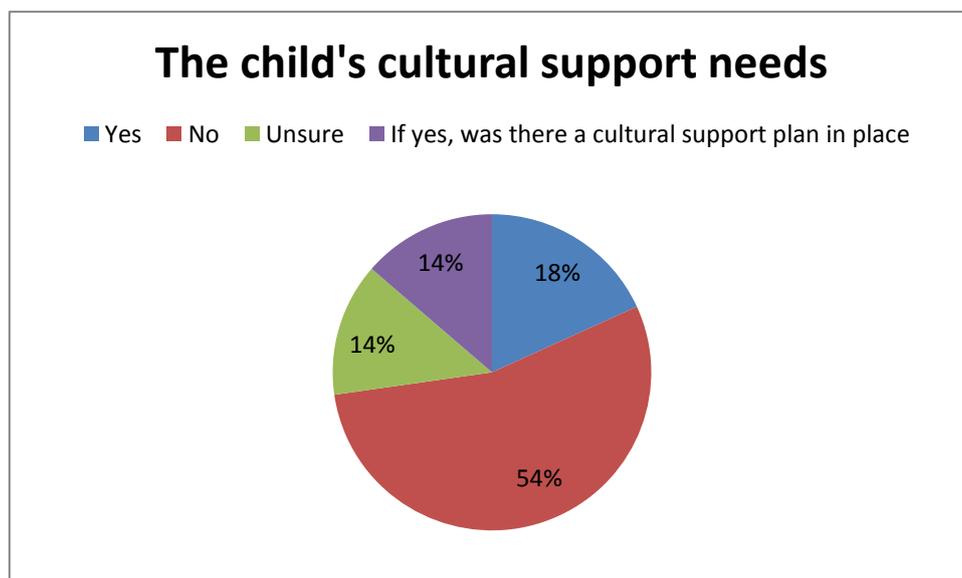
Question: The Experience of Caring – Communication

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.

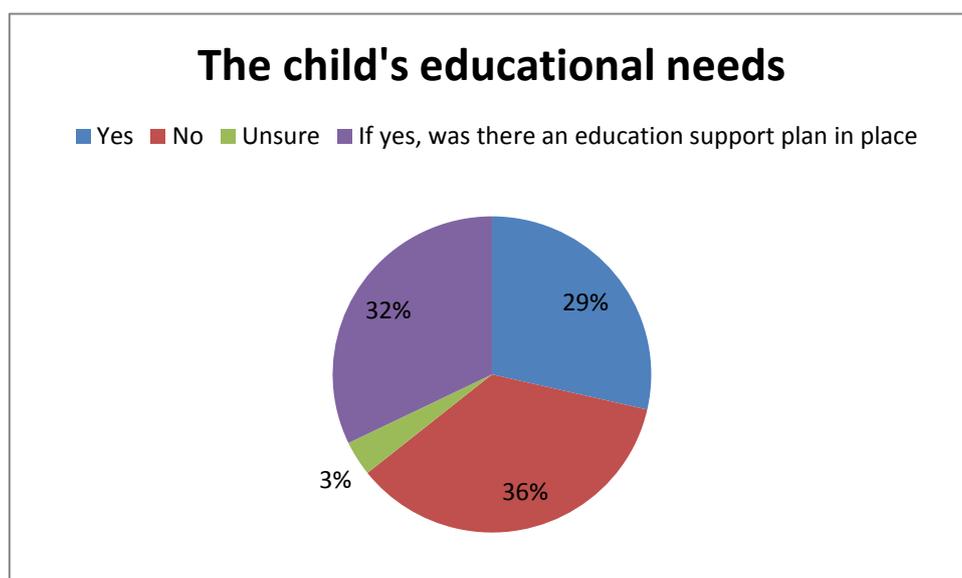


The carers were asked to identify whether Child Safety discussed the following matters with them.

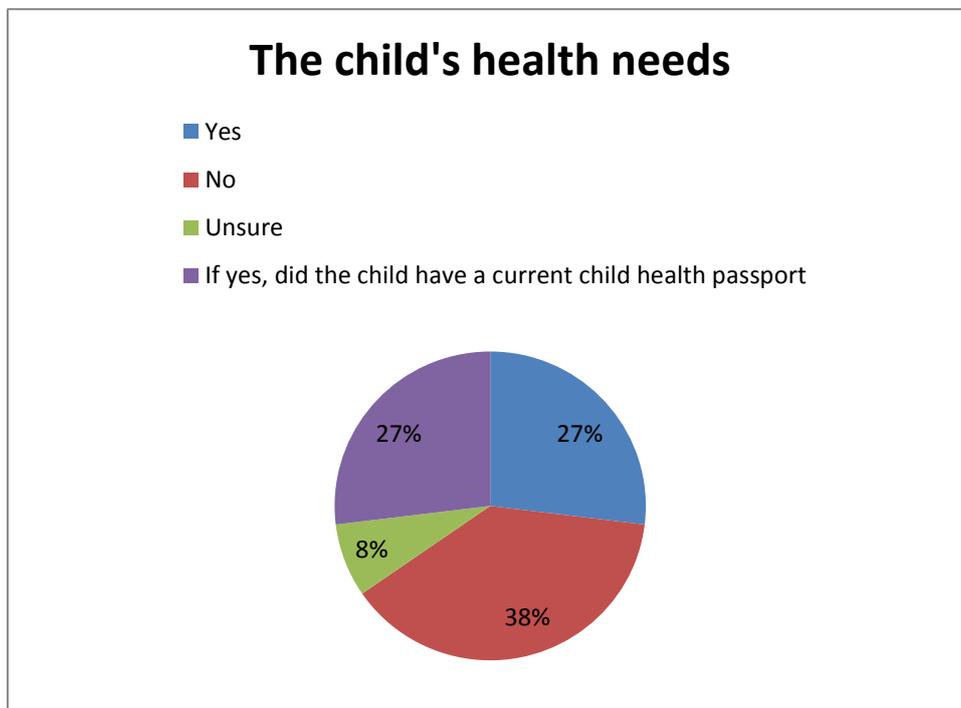
- The child's cultural support needs
- The child's educational needs
- The child's health needs
- None of the above



18% of carers identified that Child Safety discussed the child's cultural support needs and 14% had a cultural support plan in place.

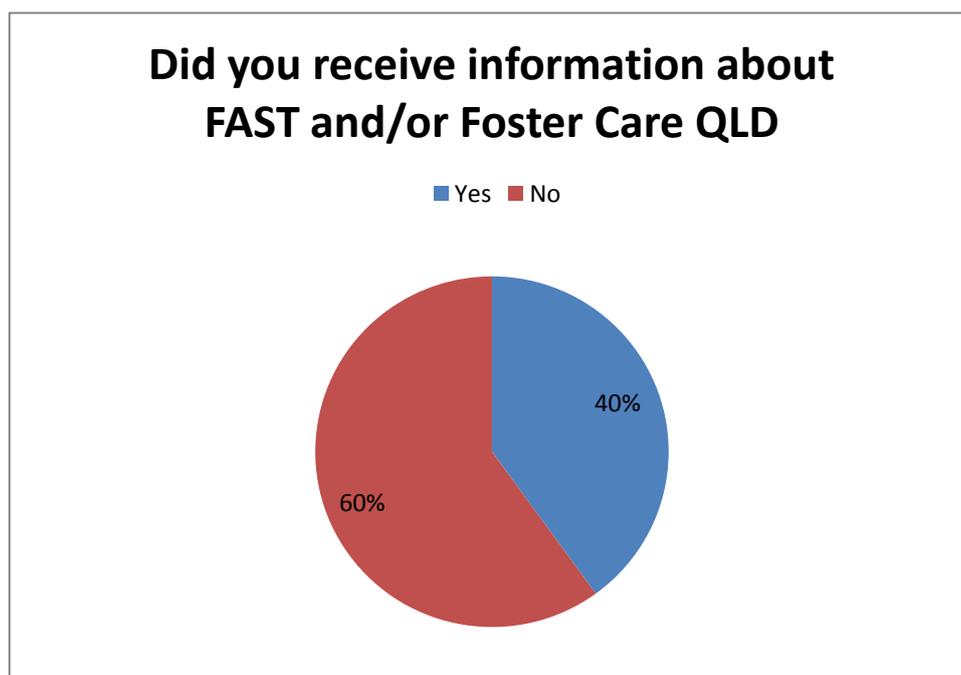


29% of carers identified that Child Safety discussed the child’s educational needs and 32% had an educational support plan in place.



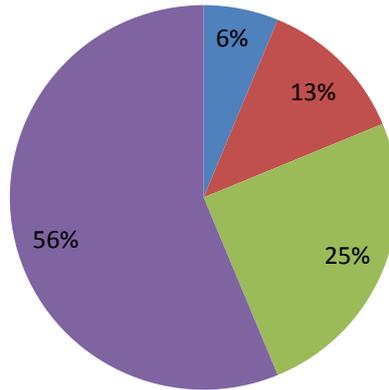
27% of Carers identified that Child Safety discussed the child’s health needs and 27% had a current child health passport.

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



How often did you have contact with Child Safety staff

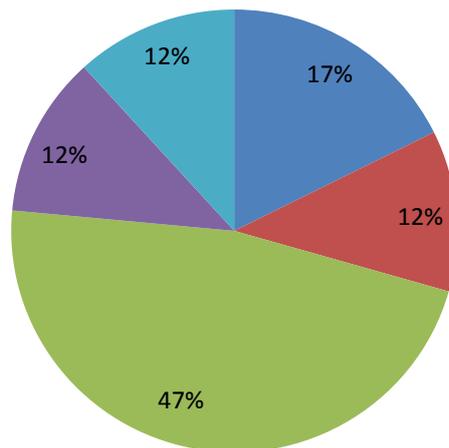
■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Monthly ■ Only occasionally



B

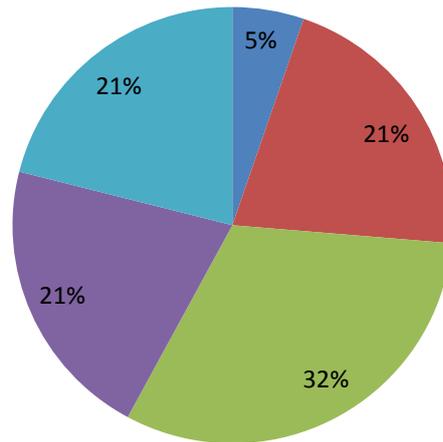
How did contact occur?

■ Phone call ■ Home Visit ■ Email ■ Meeting at the office ■ Other



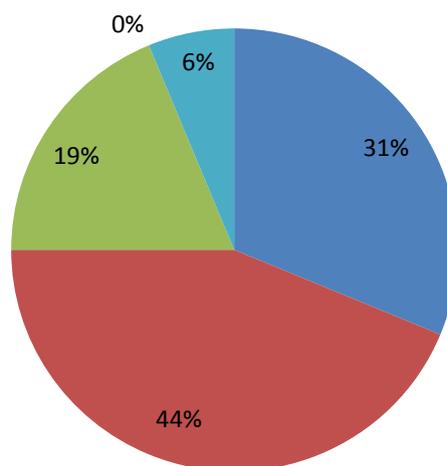
How often did you have contact with your Foster and Kinship Care Service?

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



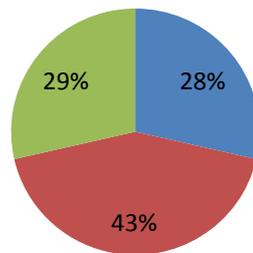
How did this contact occur?

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



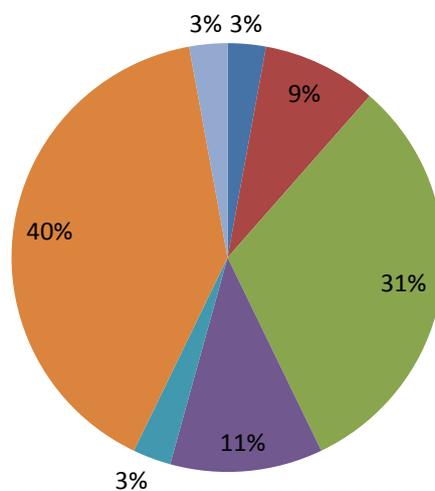
What was your preference regarding contact?

■ E-mail ■ Phone ■ Face to face



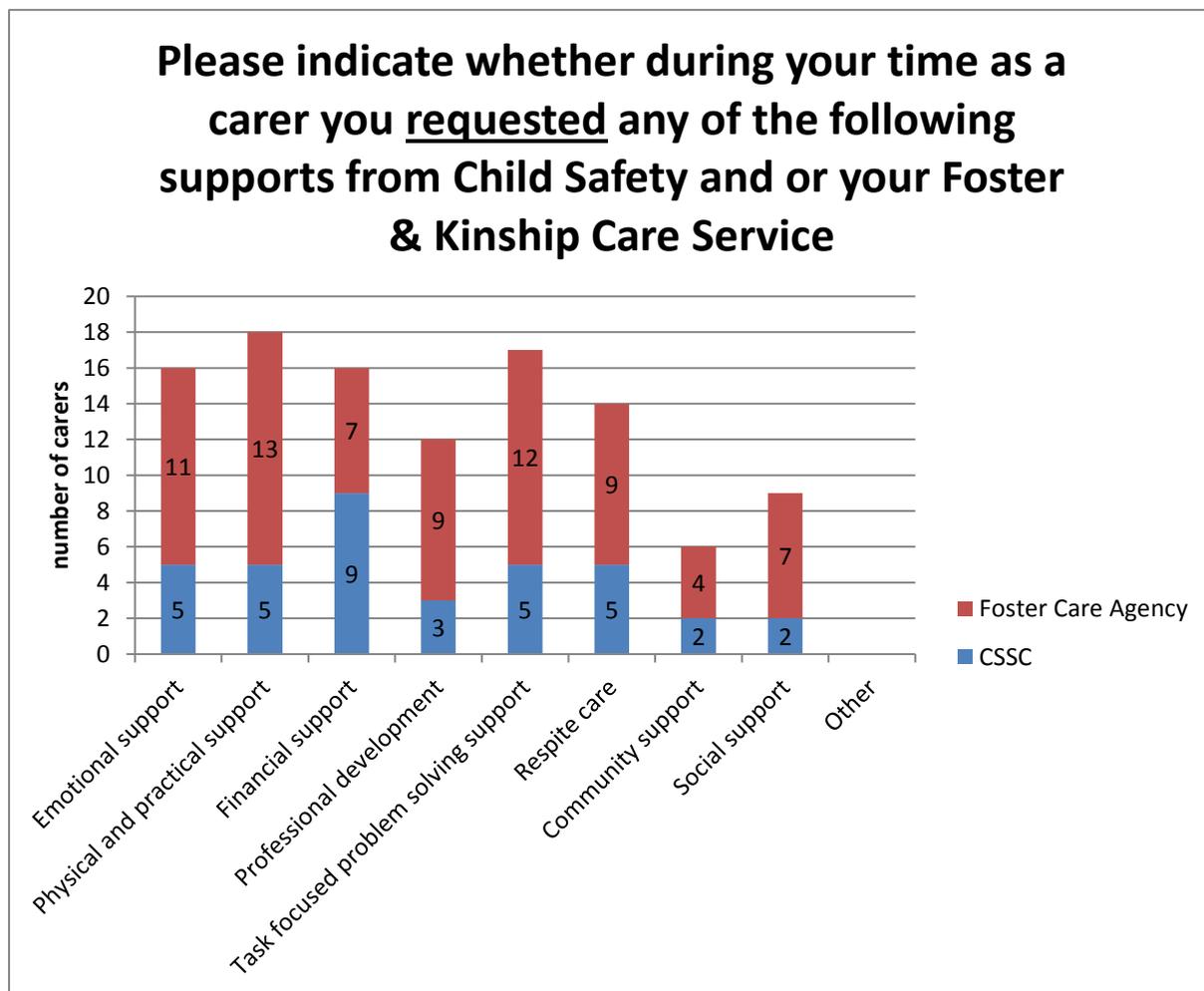
Which of the following persons did you usually have contact with?

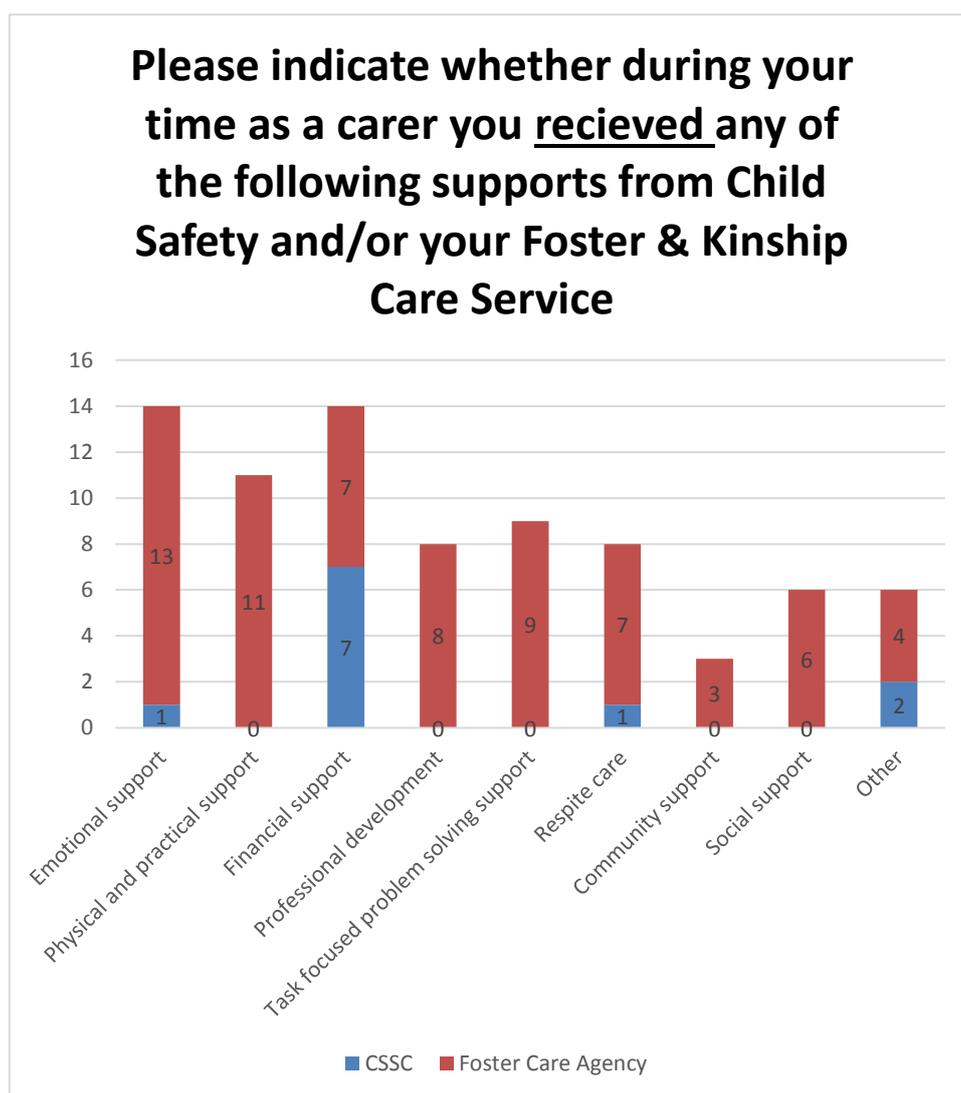
■ Child Safety Service Centre Managers
 ■ Child Safety Team Leaders
 ■ Child Safety Officers
 ■ Child Safety Support Officers (family support worker)
 ■ Child Safety Youth Worker
 ■ Foster and Kinship Care Service Workers
 ■ None of the above



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 it from was,
- Were there other supports you would have liked access to

Below are the responses supplied:

- I received support from FCQ and the agency
- Family
- other foster carers
- my family and friends
- Time for grandparents WAAVS, Private Psychologist, BAISI
- Just my personal circle of friends.
- Family members
- The agency at Caboolture Qld came on board with us very late in the picture. Which I think is part of the failure of this placement. The girls at the agency were amazing human beings. So caring, understanding and helpful to both the child in care and us as carers. It was a shame that it took the Dept so long to refer us to a support agency. The ladies at the agency gave us

a lot of intense support in a very small time frame and we very much appreciated every bit of their help. They guided us very calmly through the process and were also the 'level' head when dealing with the Department (who did not have the child's needs in mind at all!).

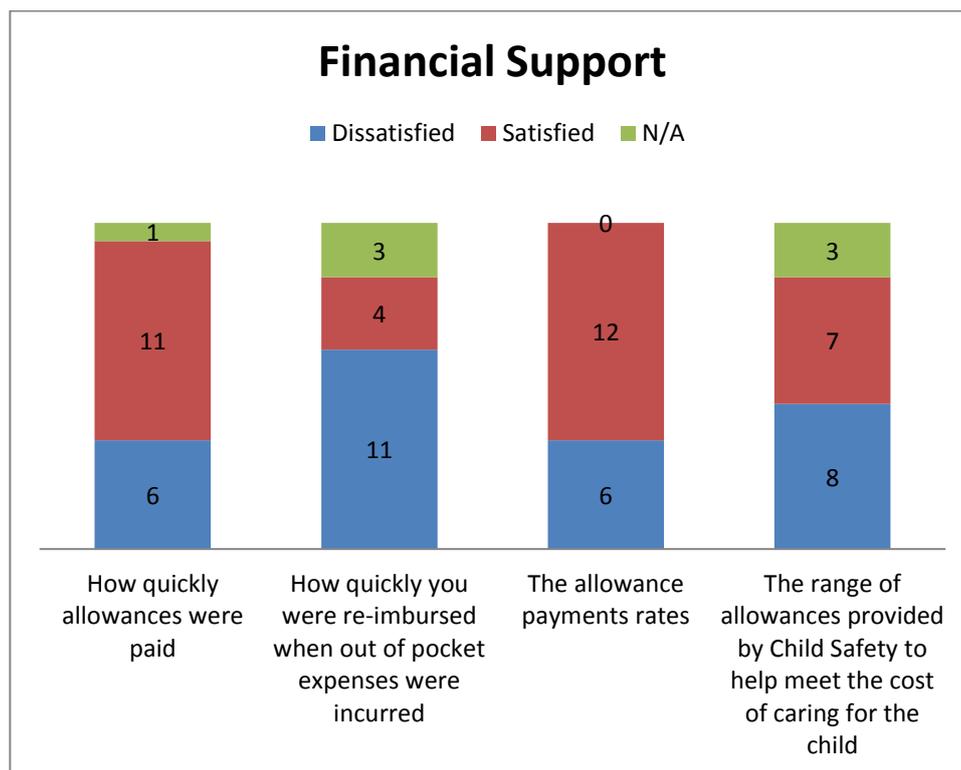
- More support from other carers
- I did seek support from child safety but received little to no support in any area i.e. in seeing the kids more often and what was happening with the fact that my nephew was molested in care, my nephew did not receive the support he needed until we pushed for counselling

Responses to, were there other supports you would have liked access to.

- yes but didn't get them
- Regular respite or more day-care day's gaps.
- Psychologists that work outside the box & in the real world. Not the govt time slots and regime. Camps designed for children with such severe trauma issues.
- Better agency and child safety workers - always very inconsistent and lots of hand over

Question: The Experience of Caring – Financial Support

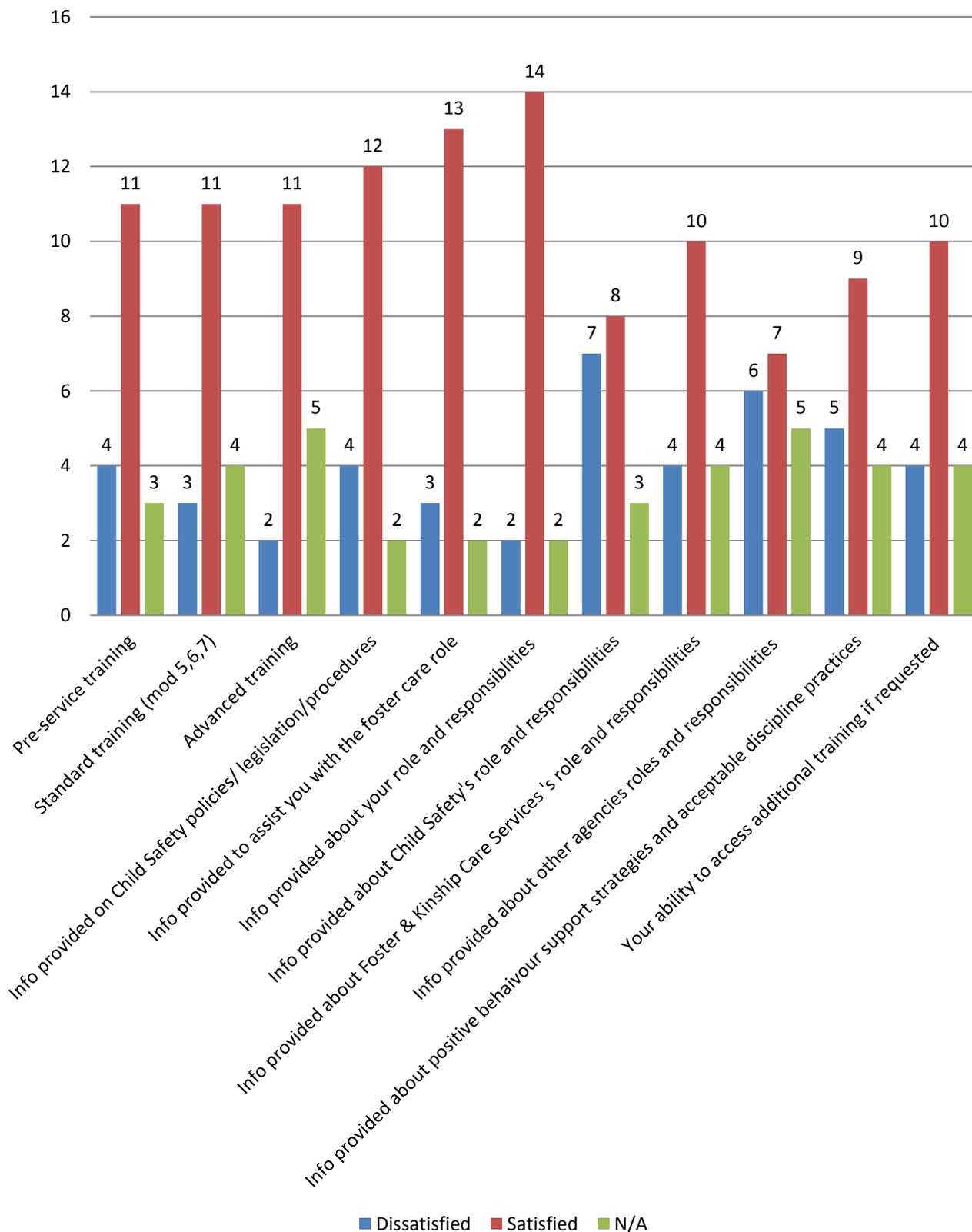
Experience of caring in relation to financial support.



Responses from carers in relation to financial support:

- When I was being bullied and victimised by DOCS, they would purposely lose my receipts
- Took CSN2 from complex child that was becoming more complicated
- During our placement we did not receive set up or establishment costs. We had out of pocket expenses that are still unpaid. we received carer allowance over a week after placement started.
- Didn't know there was a range and mostly paid for sport etc. myself. Re Training and development - what training?
- I chased up a dual payment we were promised but it wasn't paid. It took over 8 weeks of constant chasing up... disgusting. Other respite we were told would be dual payments wasn't. We were told in email writing, as it was cso suggestion to put little one in day-care that they would COVER the full gap of two days. They turned around after he was enrolled and told me she told me the wrong info despite her telling me it was from the manager. The department prioritise everything BUT the child or carers, and they shoot themselves in the foot by making things such a hassle and they lose carers due to lack of support, organisation and professionalism.
- The amount of money you receive to care for a child does not even come close to raising a child. Especially a child that requires intense therapies, medications. The payment you receive only just covers their basic living needs.

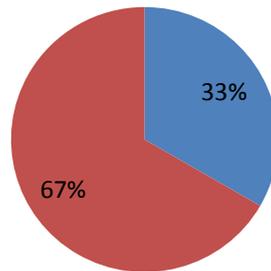
In regard to training and development, how satisfied were you with the following?



Experience to training and development.

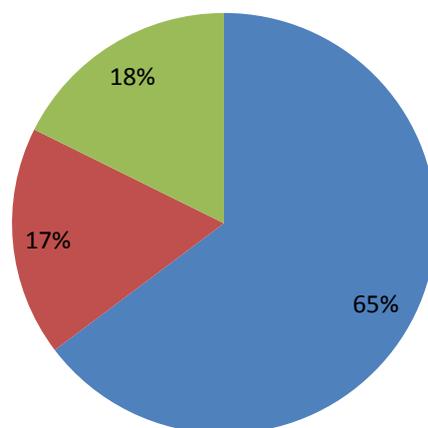
Have you attended any training in the last 12 months

■ Yes ■ No



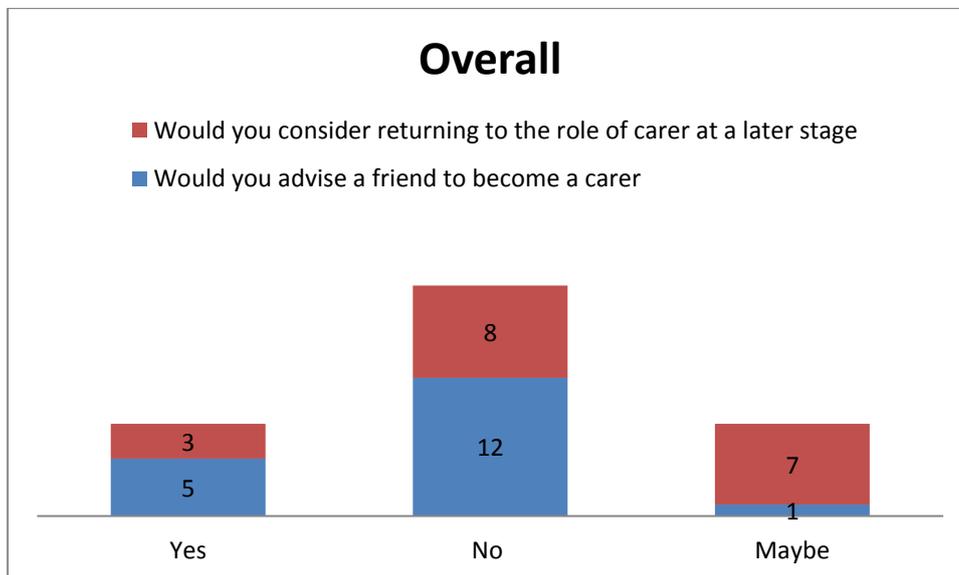
If you were approved as a Foster Carer, was there a Foster Care Agreement in place?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



Question: Overall Experience

Overall experiences.



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

- I think the foster care system is broken
- yes if conditions have improved and for the sake of the child. I was a foster carer to help and protect children
- Not even for kinship
- lack of support impacts on your own family
- Not a chance. The department are disgusting in regards to their treatment and respect for carers. They get to clock off from work but when we are caring for a child in our homes it is not a job, they are with us 24/7 and we make constant sacrifices to care for them and it is not appreciated or supported.
- Hard and challenging experience with the agency and the policies that binds the foster care field

Would you consider returning to the role of carer at a later stage

- If I never dealt with certain Dept workers again
- with the appropriate support for a placement
- If we were treated fairly
- Yes if with a different department and they actually did their job

Q2. Did your experience of providing care meet the expectations you had when you decided to become a carer?

- We loved having the child in our home and having the opportunity to "spoil" her and give her the undivided attention that she could not normally receive.
- I just wanted to provide care for the kids. I did not expect to be bullied, victimised and lied about.
- Loved seeing children happy and improving socially.
- Only for grandchildren if the need arise.
- Did not realize what it would really be like in terms.

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

- Having young children to care for again.
- Dealing with the most recent foster mother. We had no problems at all with the previous two and I had had a very amicable relationship with her original foster parents for 6 years.
- The constant Political Correctness and too much pandering to the biological parents.
- Being talked down to by DOCS, being bullied and watching DOCS put the parents needs before the children.
- Child safety.
- Bad CSO.
- not being prepared due to lack of information no support.
- knowing that decisions have been made and young people don't get the opportunity or the carer to say goodbye.
- Not having telephone calls/emails returned.
- Child Safety.
- Dealing with the department. With the last placement we had, his behaviours were also challenging, but wouldn't have been so bad if we had more support.
- The behaviours of complex kids.
- We were not given any details of the child's life prior to being placed with us. We were given a 'rosy' outlook which was so far from the truth. Dealing with hygiene issues, sexual inappropriateness, learning problems, self-harm and multiple other problems without knowledge of them or training was very challenging for us.
- Dealing with Dept of Families.
- Dealing with behaviours, support from Child Safety was not as forthcoming as expected.
- No support for the children, systemic issues.
- Dealing with docs.

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

- Watching my grandchildren grow and develop.
- Having the opportunity to make a difference in the child's life. Providing her with an example of what a family could be and showing her the results of hard work and loving relationships. Reinforcing to her that it was possible to "break the cycle" with good behaviour and hard work.
- Impacting precious children in a positive way and making a difference in their lives.
- Watching my foster children grow into beautiful and caring human beings. One of my foster children got a degree in nursing and an Australia day award.

- The kids I met.
- Knowing you make a difference.
- Being able to provide love support and a safe place to young people at risk.
- Knowing the children were safe and cared for.
- Seeing the children grow and evolve.
- Helping the kids.
- The love you received from the child due to the attention they received in a positive manner.
- To meet this little girl. I hope that one day we meet again and she can function in life.
- Seeing the child go back to families.
- Having the little boy placed with us, be reunified with his family.
- The children in need being in our home Carers respecting them for respite care.
- Seeing my niece and nephews and spending quality time with them on a regular basis.

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

- Not much.
- My previous Case Manager although she left. She was an older lady full of compassion and a good listener.
- Agency support.
- Agency.
- My family.
- My SOC from the agency.
- Counselling when I finally got linked in with Silky Oaks in March.
- I got PTSD.
- The rare times communication was clear.
- The agency was good in respect of having things in place to assist.
- Agency Caseworkers staff were incredible. They were the only reason the placement finished as professionally and calmly as it did.
- Agency.
- Other foster carers.
- Nothing, only family support.

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

- The CSO's and support workers should have more authority to deal with bad behaviour from both the children in their care and the foster parents.
- More listening and actually getting the issue addressed.
- Being listened to.
- Weed out bad CSO's at the ground level. Don't blame managers for unscrupulous CSO's.
- Appropriate support and placement matching i.e. we advised criteria knowing it would impact on all concerned this was ignored placement fell over.
- How do you answer that question when the system doesn't work.
- Communication Support Groups PD Sessions.
- The system needs an overhaul.
- Respect. We know these children better than anyone so our advice and opinions have to count for something!
- The interaction between carer & child safety as they passed everything off to the agency with little help.

- Telling carers the full story and history of the child. Training them on how to handle the trauma prior to placing the child with them.
- Support from Child Safety Department, knowledge of the child's history to be better prepared.
- Support from the care team - agencies, department.
- Communication and empathy on docs behalf.

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

- It appears to us that the Department is desperate for foster carers and unsuitable candidates are having children placed with them, even in some cases before they have been approved as carers.
- Do a better evaluation of Carers. I met some as was absolutely flabbergasted at how they actually got to foster precious children. Less RED TAPE and more realistic practical approach.
- I believe DOCS workers should pass a psychological test. If they have controlling personalities or are bullies, they should not be in the job. I was also disappointed that I wrote to The Childrens' Commissioner and the Premier about my concerns with DOCS sending my foster child home to be sexually abused, and the response took 4 months to remove the child. It's been 14 years since this has happened and it's been hard on the child and our family. The child is now 18 and has many problems.
- I requested meeting that was cancelled to change CSO. Meeting never rescheduled. Got email that I was getting a different CSO then that got squashed as well. Department office is the worst I had ever dealt with. Even down to getting paperwork with wrong names and dates. Just a bad cut and paste job.
- given the process took two years before being placed with a child that was not supported we did not renew our application.
- Being a carer isn't an easy decision so leaving is an even bigger decision, what does the future hold in a flawed world...
- My case was tricky as the case was a service centre outside of where I lived and I resided in a different area. However, I don't think the children and myself should have been penalised due to the locality. Foster care wouldn't become involved due to this issues and this I had to find services for myself. I felt unsupported and found the role meeting the needs of 4 children of different ages very difficult. With the help and assistance of 'time for grandparents' we would have had no respite (went on g'parent camp) and no counselling for younger children. I paid for put psychologist for older teen initially until CS came good & paid for gap months later. At no time was I advised what I could claim for and found my own courses to attend. Happy to be contacted if it will improve situation for someone else.
- You're going to lose a lot of carers. Good luck.
- Children need to come first, not paperwork. Not listening to the carer, even very specific conditions/requests. Not complying/supporting.
- Yes but I choose not to say.