CARER EXIT SURVEY

North Coast Region

2017-2018

FOSTER CARE QUEENSLAND

Contents

Executive Summary 103

Summary – North Coast Region 110

Question: About You 111

Question: About Your Role as a Carer 113

Question: Reasons for Discontinuing as a Foster/Kinship Carer 114

Question: The Experience of Caring 119

- Question: The Experience of Caring – Communication 120
- Question: The Experience of Caring – Support 126
- Question: The Experience of Caring – Financial Support 128
- Question: The Experience of Caring – Training and Development 129

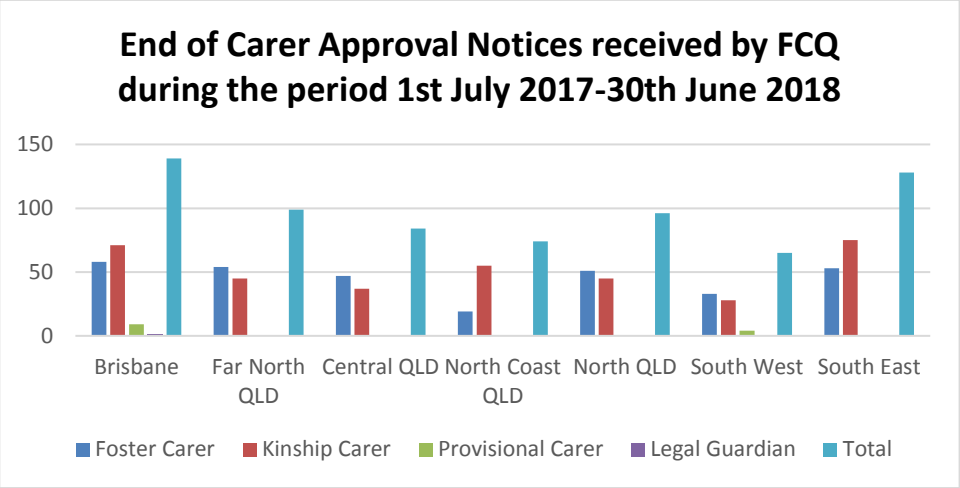
Question: Overall Experience 131

Executive Summary

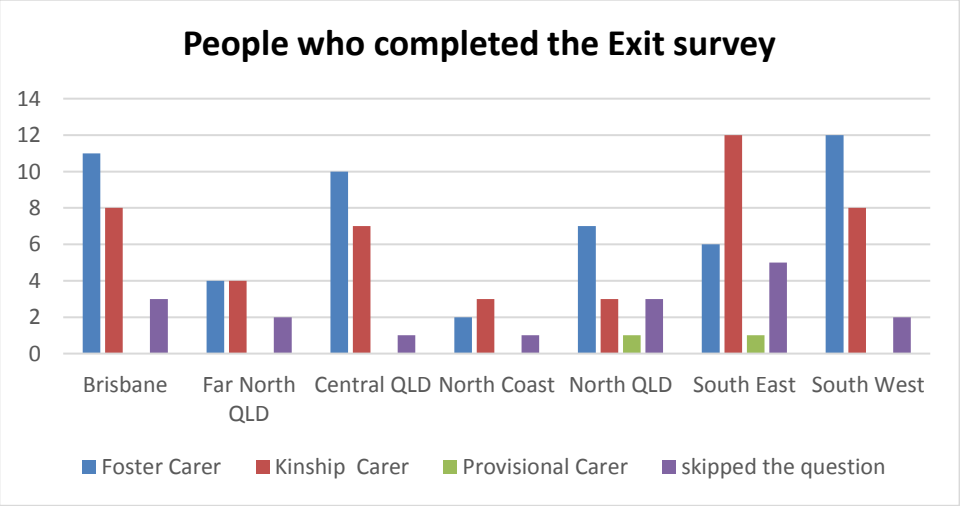
Information relating to End of Carer Approval Notices

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 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 have 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.

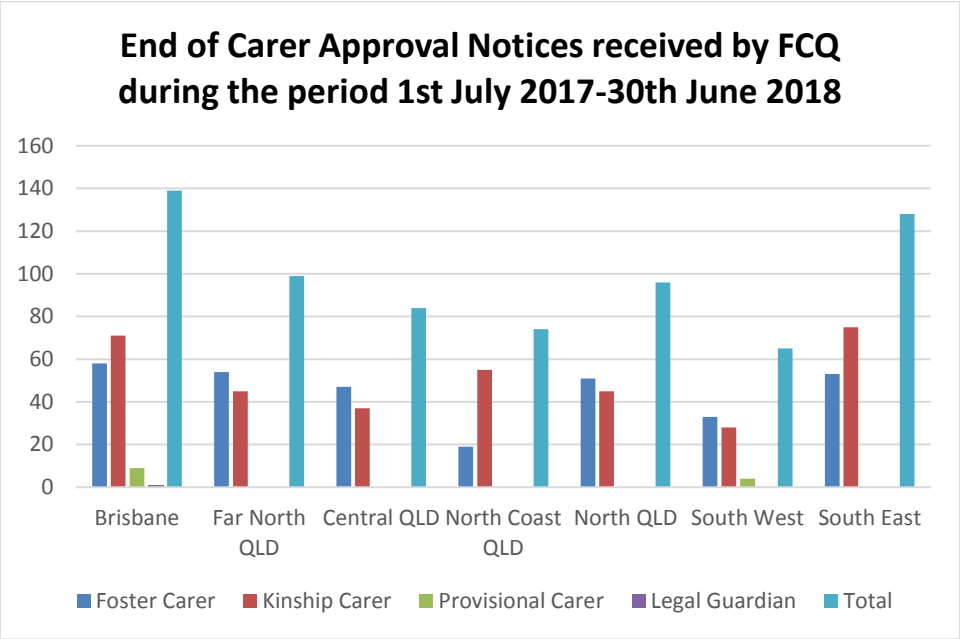
It was acknowledged by the Brisbane Region in March 2018 that they had reviewed their data and failed to provide FCQ with all the required End of Carer Approval Notices, approximately 118. It was agreed that they would provide all additional information to FCQ. As part of the notifications that FCQ receive 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.

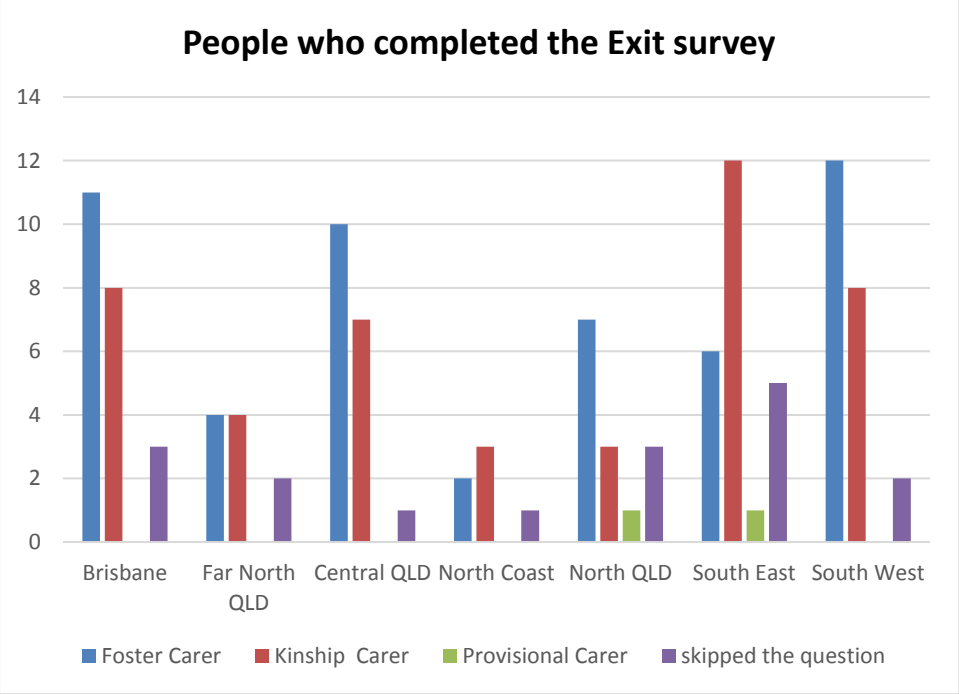
It has been noted over the years that FCQ do not receive all the End of Carer Notices that should be provided to FCQ to give the opportunity to people who would like to undertake a survey and this needs to improve to ensure equal opportunity for everybody to provide feedback.

As stated in previous reports FCQ continue 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.

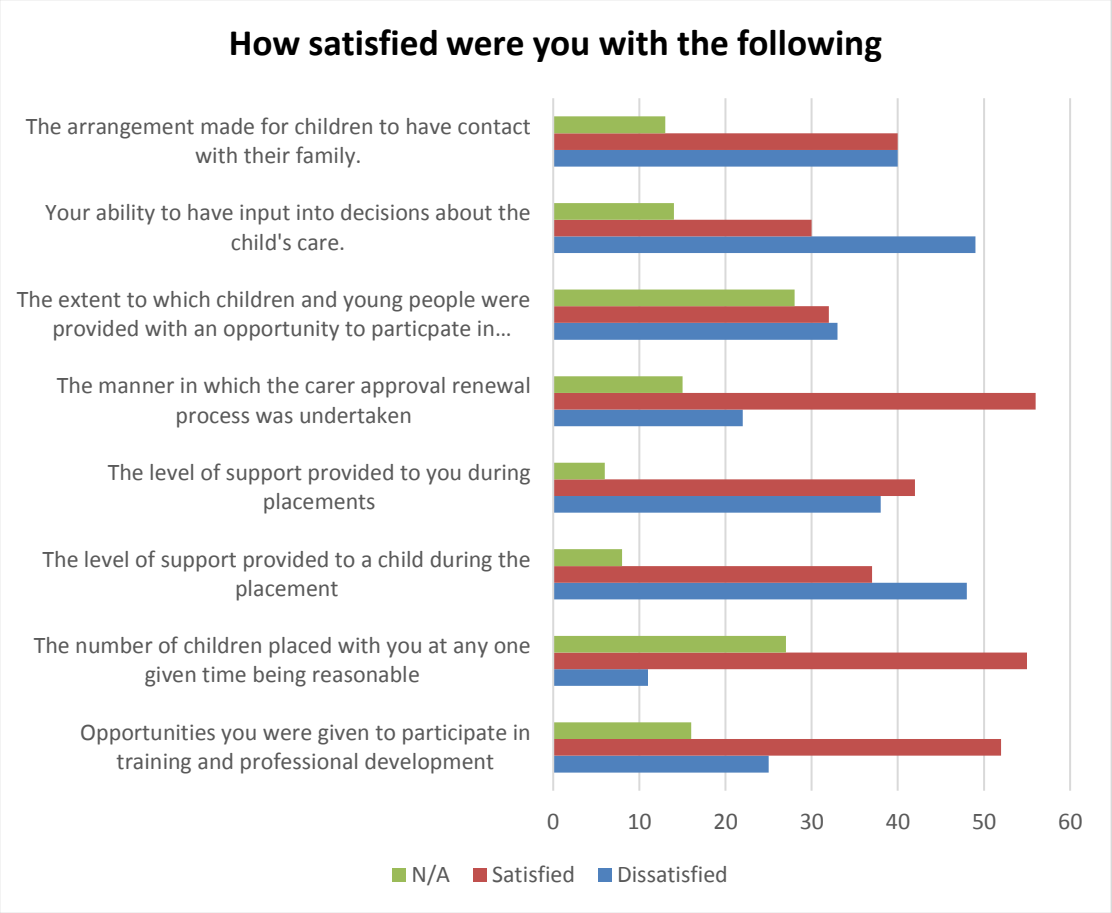
Overall across the state, there were similarities in terms of negative feedback provided, listed below are common themes from information provided in the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 reports;

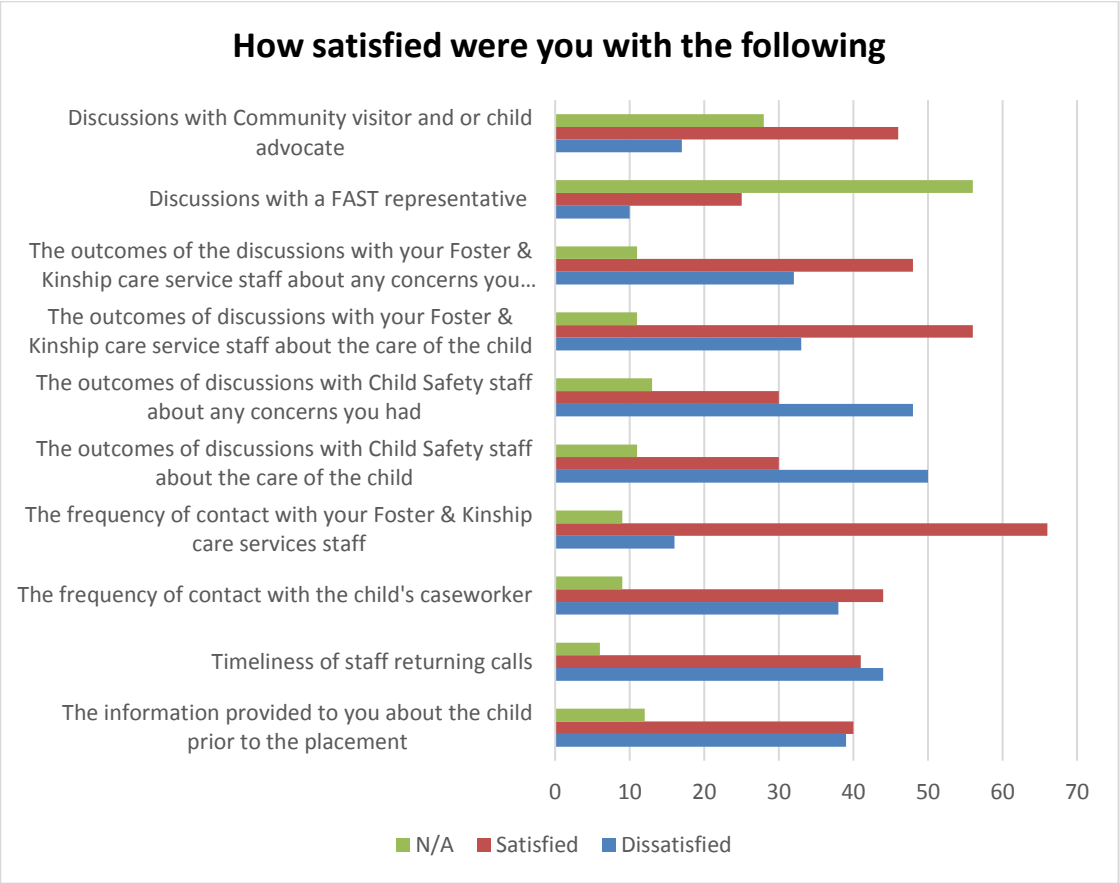
- Carers not feeling part of a care team
- Child Safety's policies and procedures, overall most people were dissatisfied where applicable.
- Child Safety's handling of a Harm Report/SOC process, overall dissatisfaction was significantly higher where applicable across the state
- The carers ability to 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.

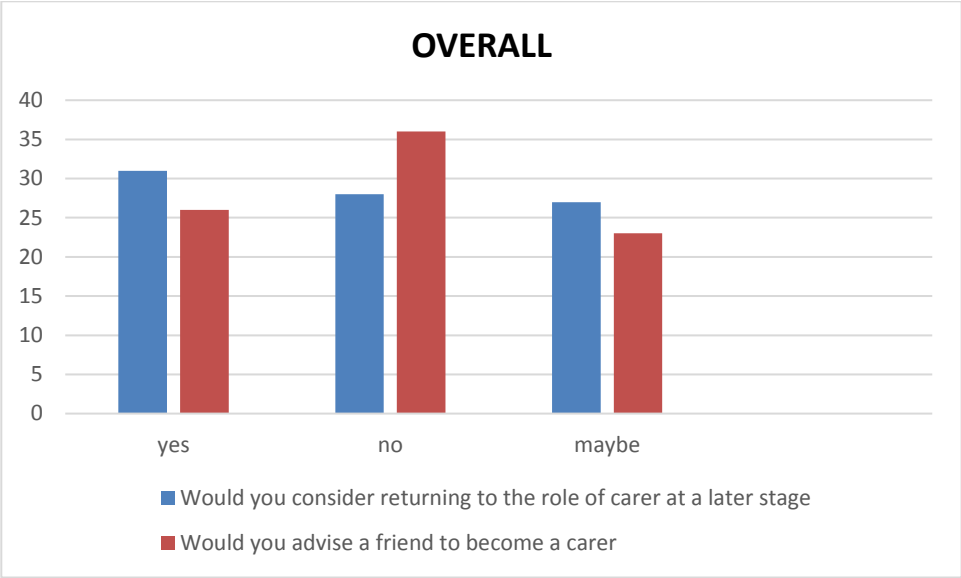

How satisfied were you with the following
The arrangement made for children to have contact with their family.
Your ability to have input into decisions about the child's care.
The extent to which children and young people were provided with an opportunity to particpate in...
The manner in which the carer approval renewal process was undertaken
The level of support provided to you during placements
The level of support provided to a child during the placement
The number of children placed with you at any one given time being reasonable
Opportunities you were given to participate in training and professional development
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
N/A
Satisfied
Dissatisfied



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:
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Executive Director

23 July 2018

Summary – North Coast Region

FCQ received a total of 685 end of carer approvals during the period of 1st July 2017-30th June 2018. 74 (10.8%) of the 685 approvals were received from the North Coast region. All 74 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 74 End of Carer Approvals consisted of:

- 2 identifying as Aboriginal
- 20 identifying as neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander
- 2 identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 50 end of carer approvals did not provide this information.
- The end of carer approvals also identified that from the 74;
    - 55 identified as Kinship Carers
    - 19 identified as Foster Carers

For the total of the 74 End of carer approvals received, only:

- 2 Foster Carers completed the survey out of 19 (10.5%)
- 3 Kinship Carers completed the survey out of 55 (5.4%)

There were 6 people (8.1%) from the North Coast area that completed a Carer Exit Survey. The following details relate to the responses that have been received from the surveys.

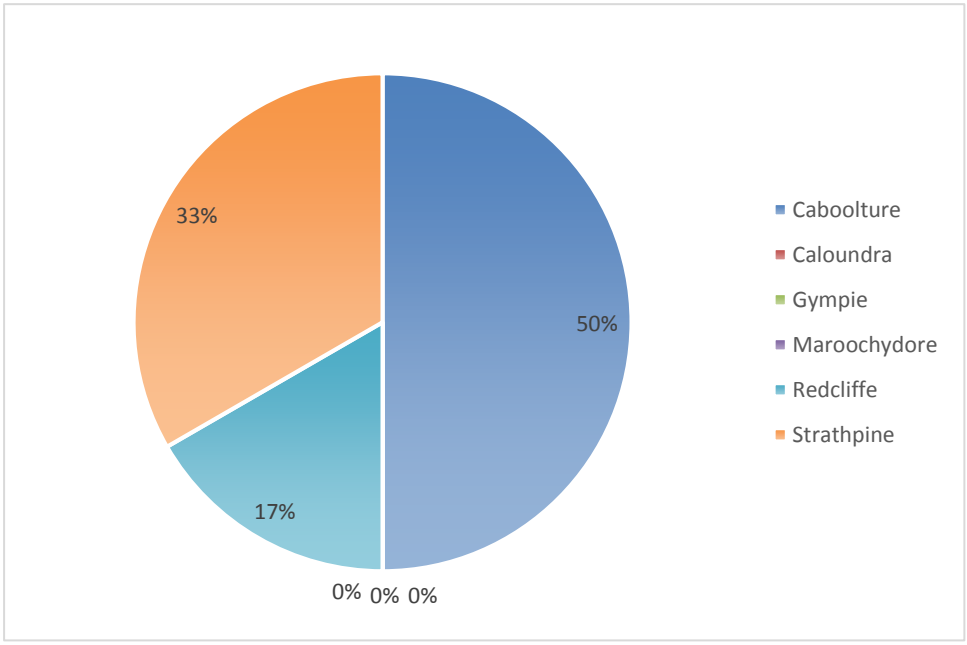
The 6 people who completed the survey provided the following information;

- 2 identified as Foster Carers
- 3 identified as Kinship Carers
- 1 person skipped this question

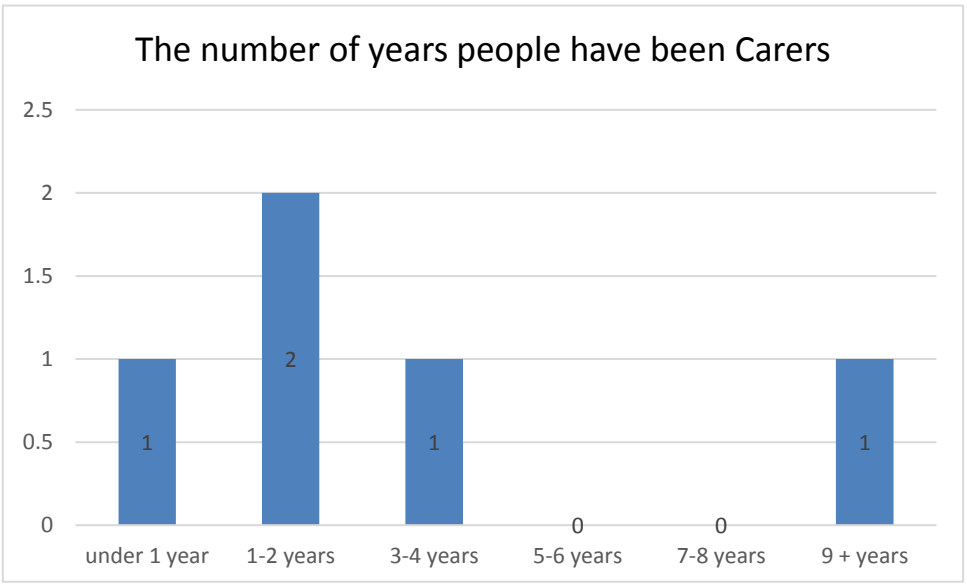
5 identified as neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander
1 identified as other (Australian)

Question: About You

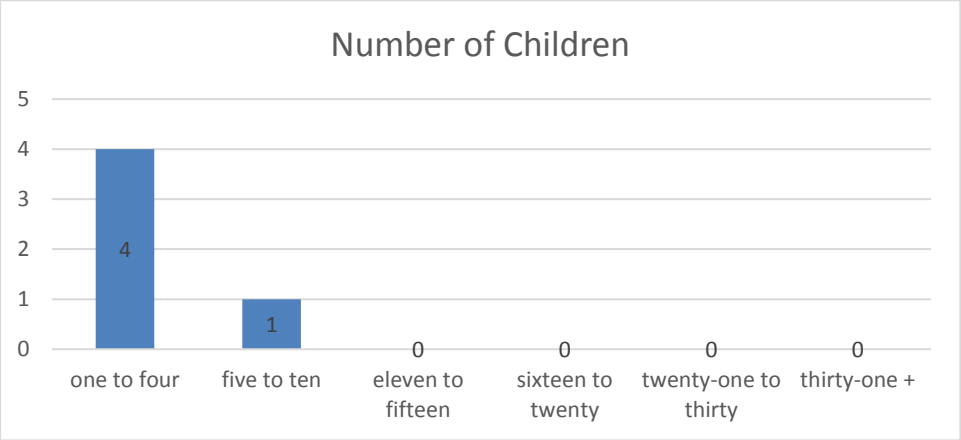
Information identifies which child safety office the person was attached to while they were Foster Carers.



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.

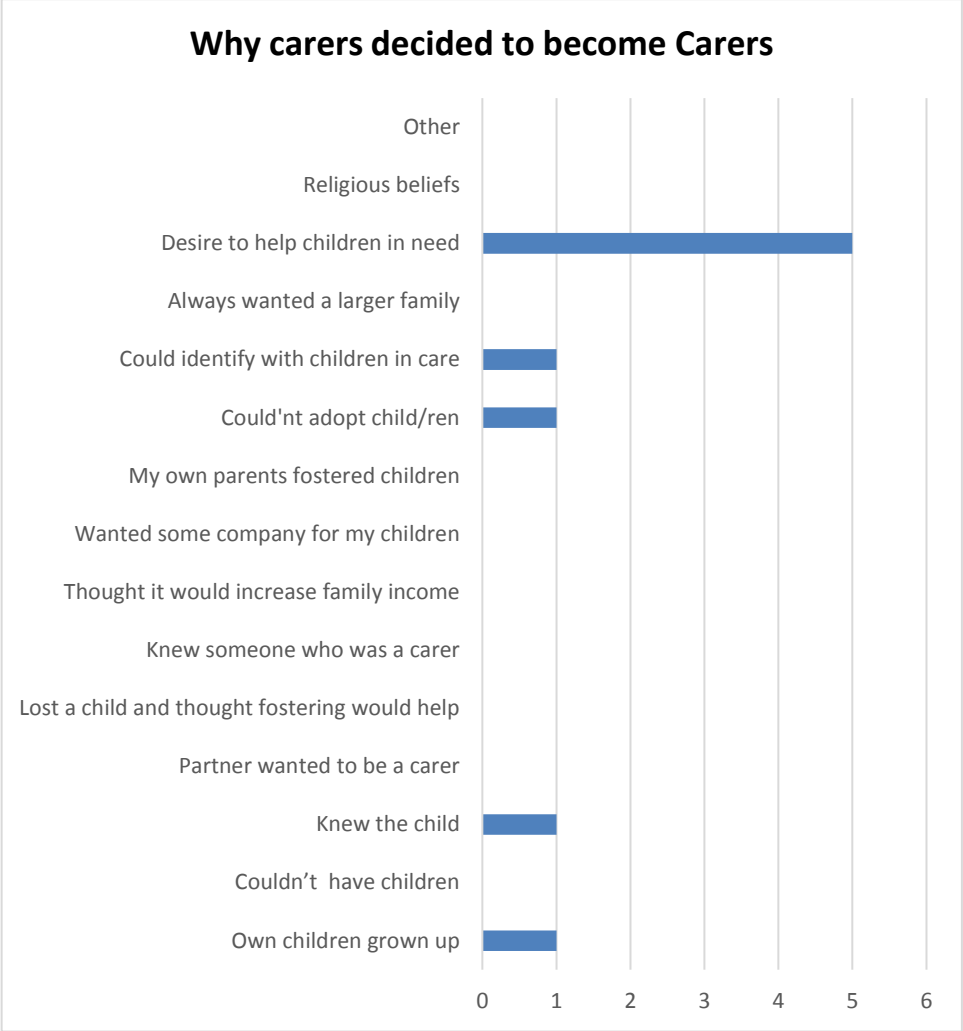


The information provided also evidences the amount of children the person/persons have provided care to.



Question: About Your Role as a Carer

People were asked to identify what made them decide to become a foster carer.

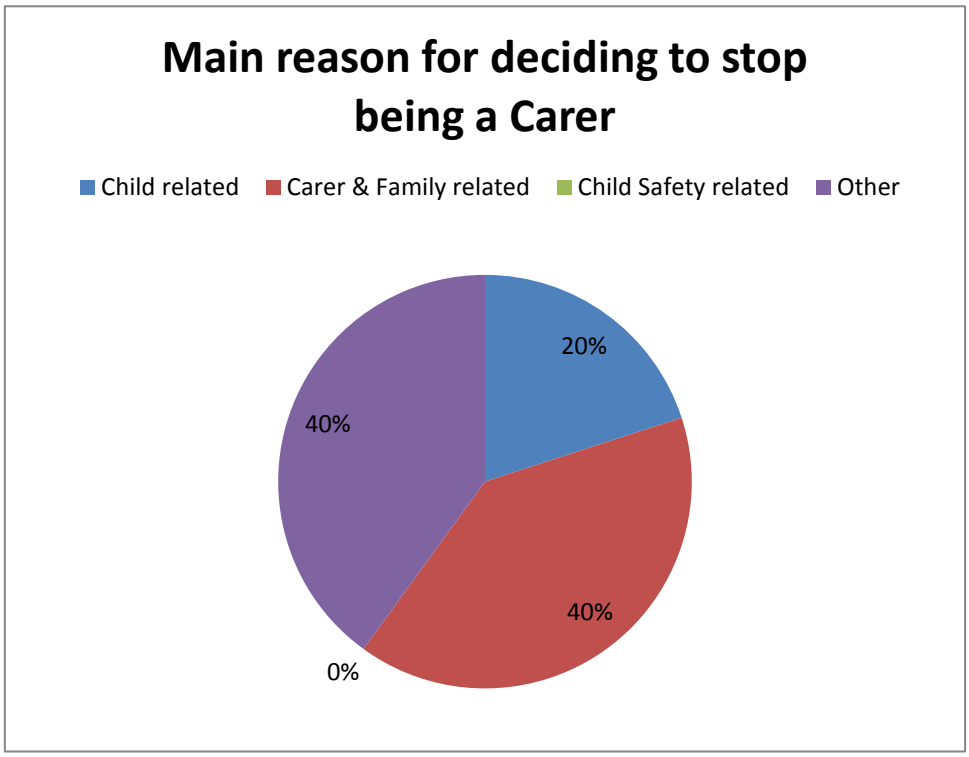


Below is a selection of some of the comments provided by the people undertaking the survey in relation to why they decided to become a Carer. This information would be consistent with the section under *other* on the graph.

- I was in foster care when I was younger & I didn't want my niece to go into care when I was capable of looking after her.
- Always enjoyed the idea and had own child with high care needs
- My wife and I decided to become carers after her time and a Child Safety Officer and our children had grown up and left home. We love children and thought we could be of service to help children who needed special attention.

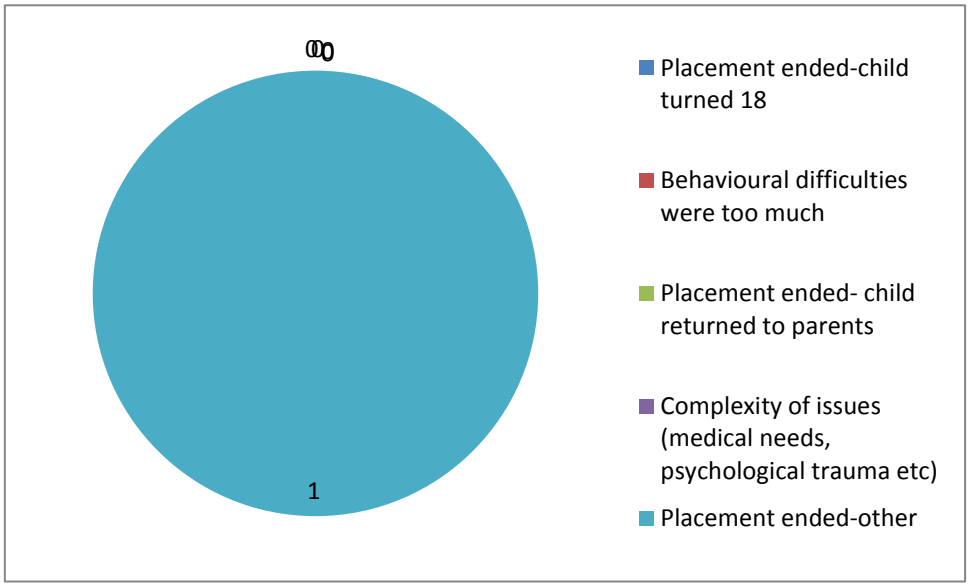
Question: Reasons for Discontinuing as a Foster/Kinship Carer

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.

- Child still with us not as kinship carers
- she didn't want to live with us anymore

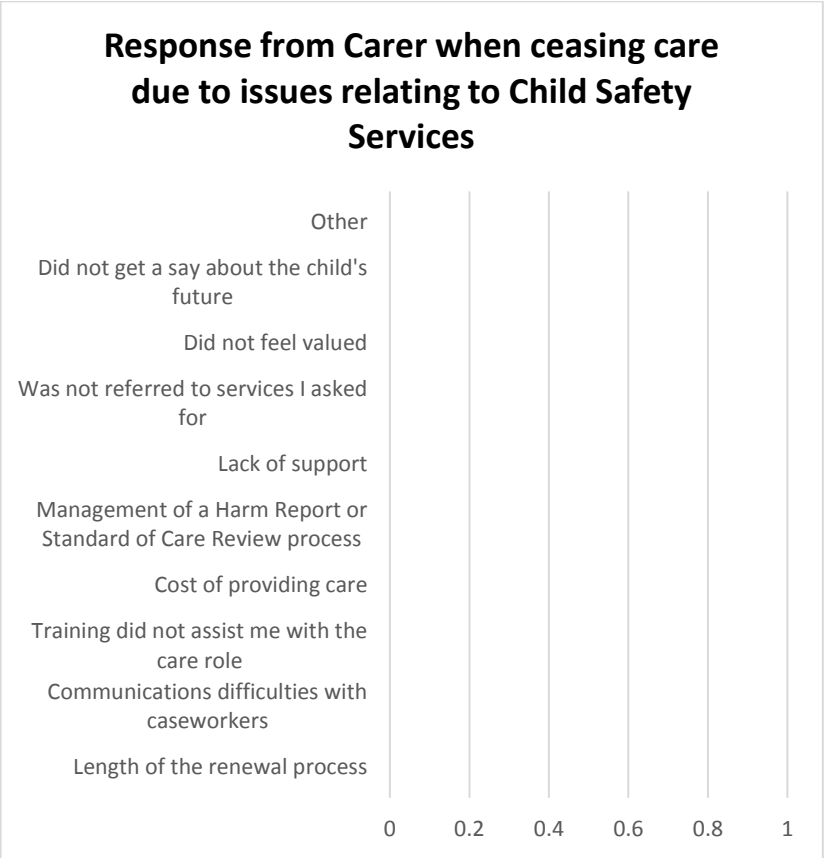


Below are extracts of comments that were made by people completing the survey in relation to this question.

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

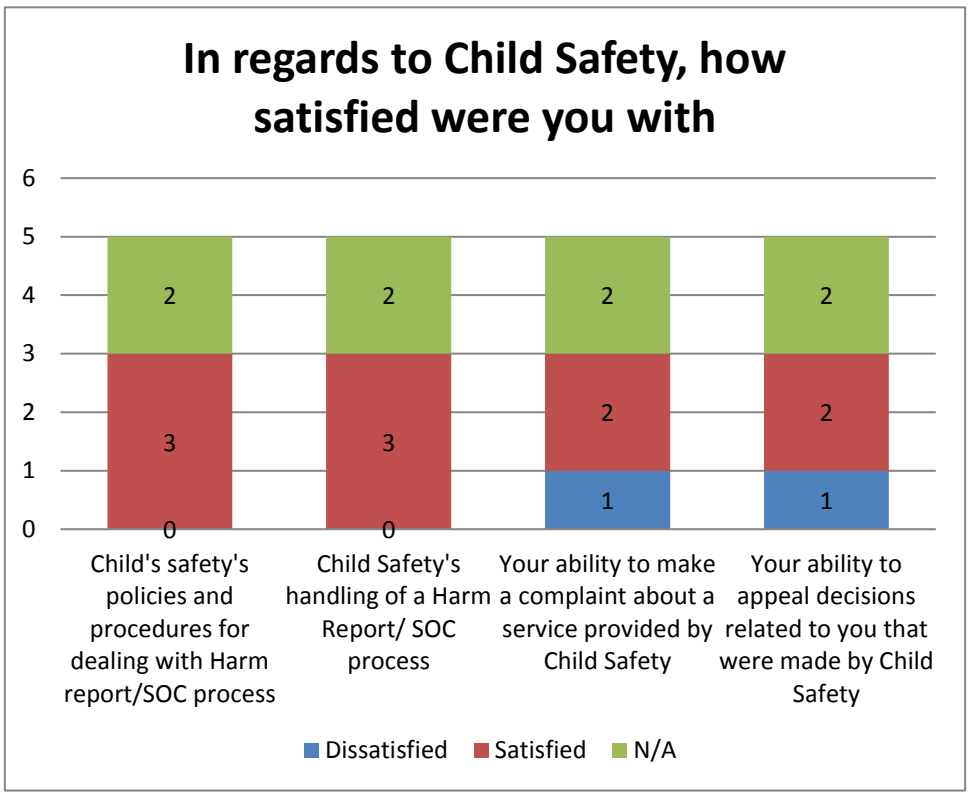
- it wasn't my decision to stop caring for my niece she chose to leave

Ceased being a Carer for reasons related to you and your family
Other
Allegations of abuse were made about me
Difficulties with interactions with birth parents
Other household member/s history checks unsuitable
Carer history checks being unsuitable
Did not meet renewal requirements
Cancellation of certificate of approval by Child Safety
Change in family circumstances
Relationship difficulties between biological and foster care children
Partner and/or children did not want to continu
Pregnancy
Time commitments
Health reasons
Moving
Cost of providing care too much
Change in employment
0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1
1.2



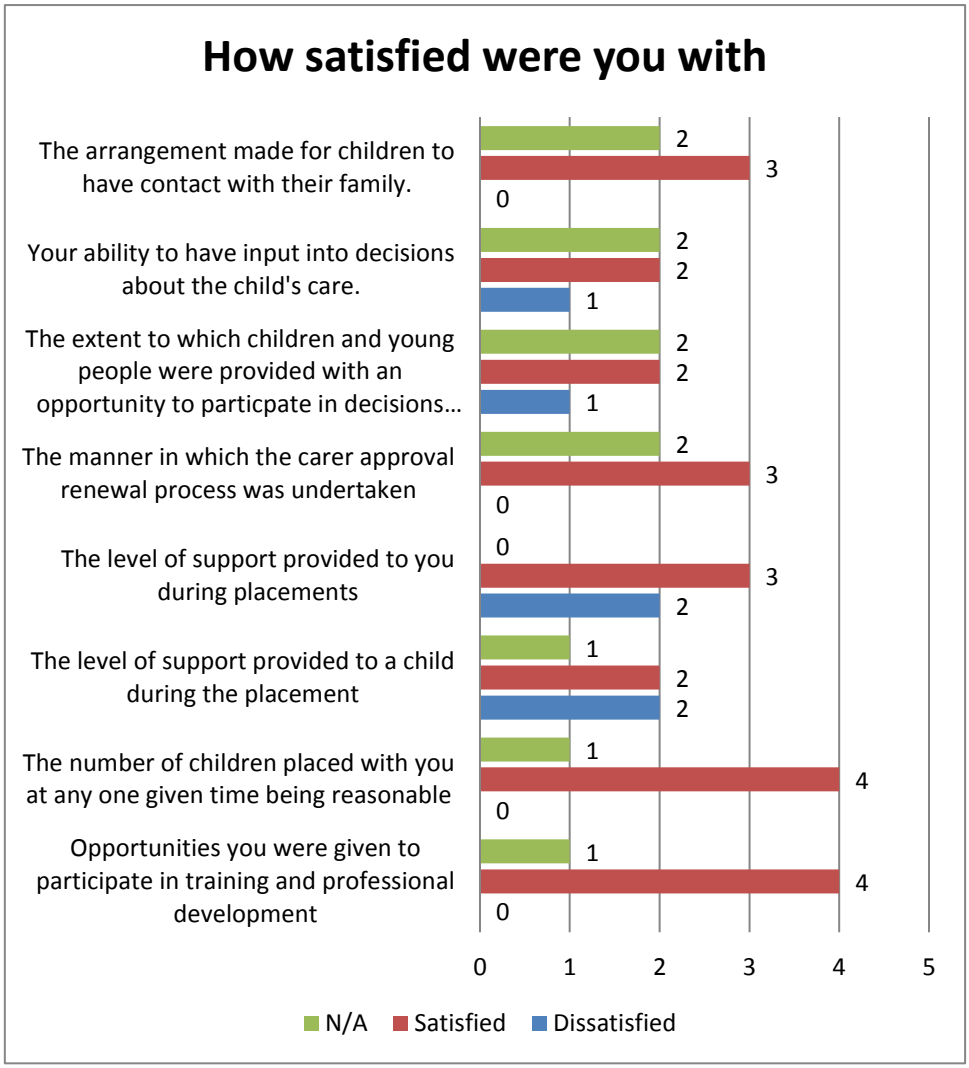
Below are extracts of comments made by carers in relation to the questions referring to why they ceased as carers if this was related to Child Safety Services.

- My niece didn't want to live with us anymore
- Carers did not want him to continue doing respite
- her cso told her she had 2 older sisters which has never been brought up before in the whole 14 years that she has been in my care
- Lack of communication between main parties.
- I totally blame her cso & I have put in a complaint with my office but nothing happened maybe I should lodge a formal complaint but that will probably fall on deaf ears
- I blame the cso


In regards to Child Safety, how satisfied were you with
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
2
3
0
2
3
0
2
2
1
2
2
1
Child's safety's policies and procedures for dealing with Harm report/SOC process
Child Safety's handling of a Harm Report/ SOC process
Your ability to make a complaint about a service provided by Child Safety
Your ability to appeal decisions related to you that were made by Child Safety
Dissatisfied
Satisfied
N/A

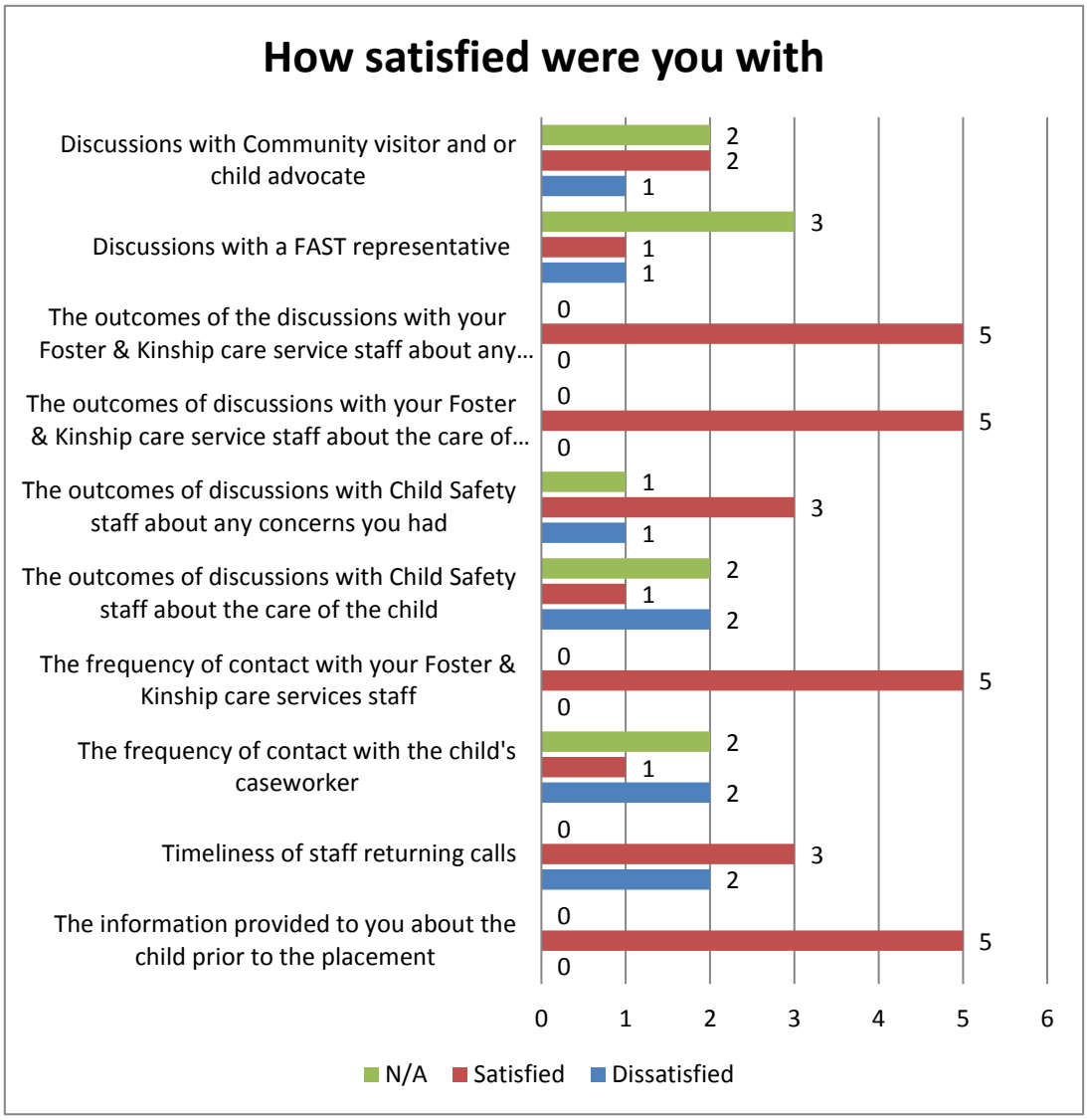
Question: The Experience of Caring

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.



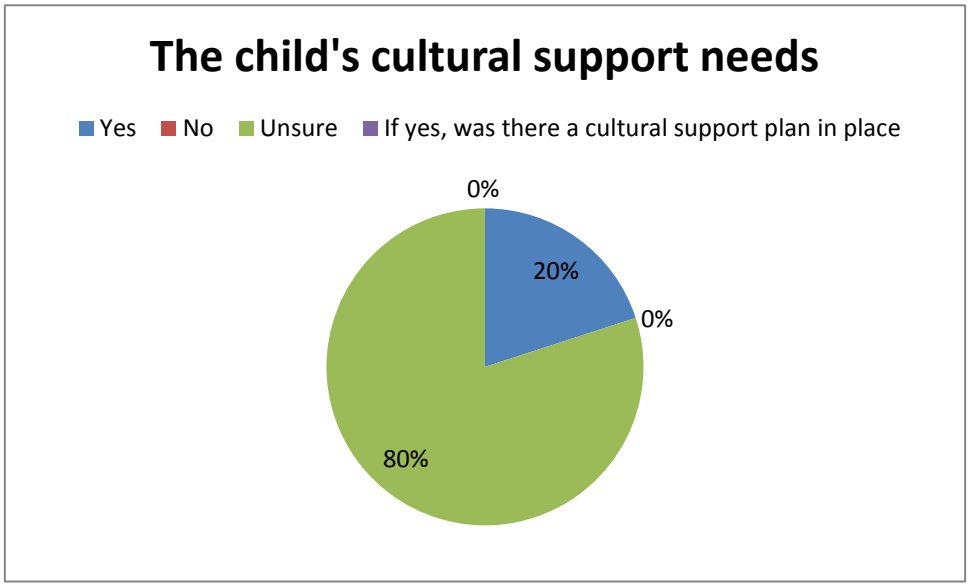
Question: The Experience of Caring – Communication

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.

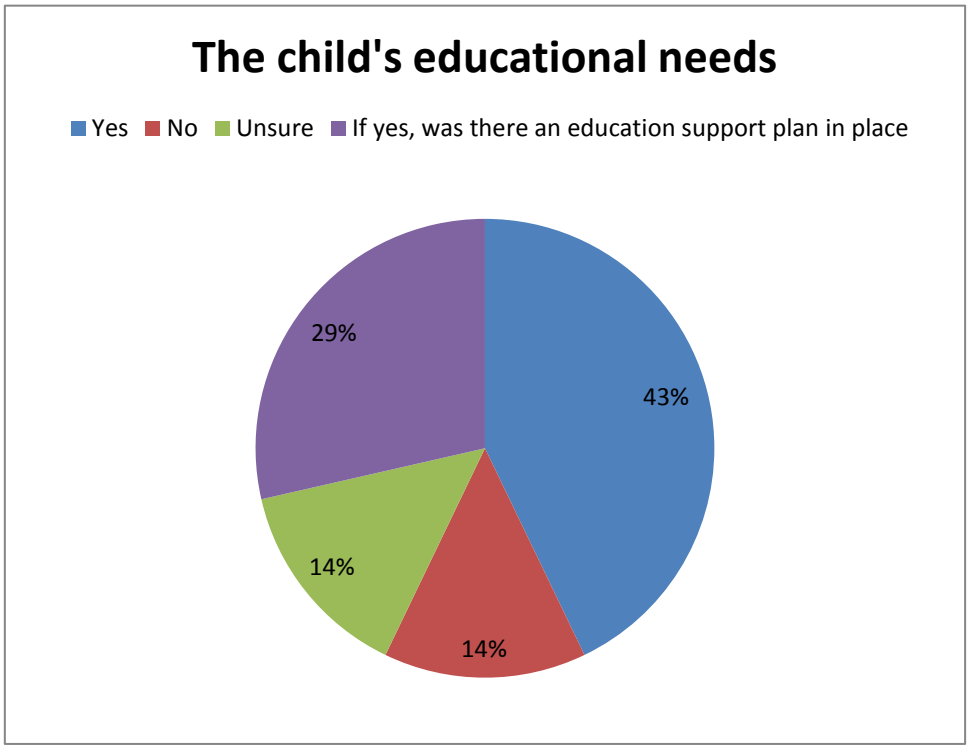


The carers were asked to identify whether Child Safety discussed the following matters with them.

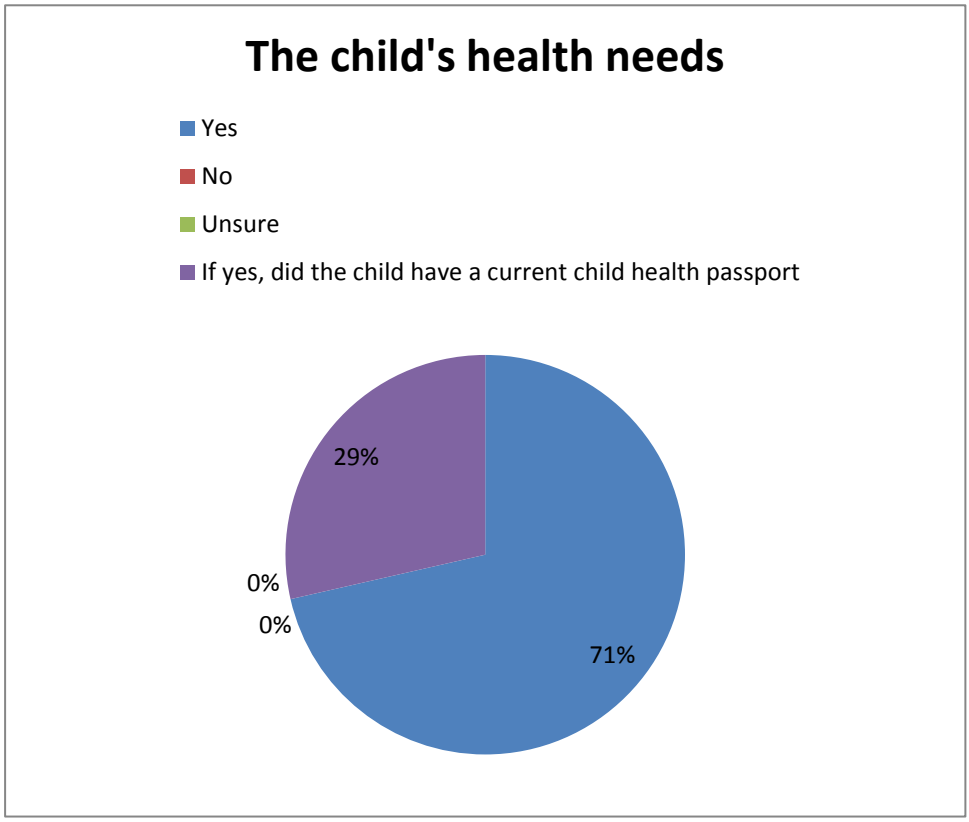
- The child's cultural support needs
- The child's educational needs
- The child's health needs
- None of the above



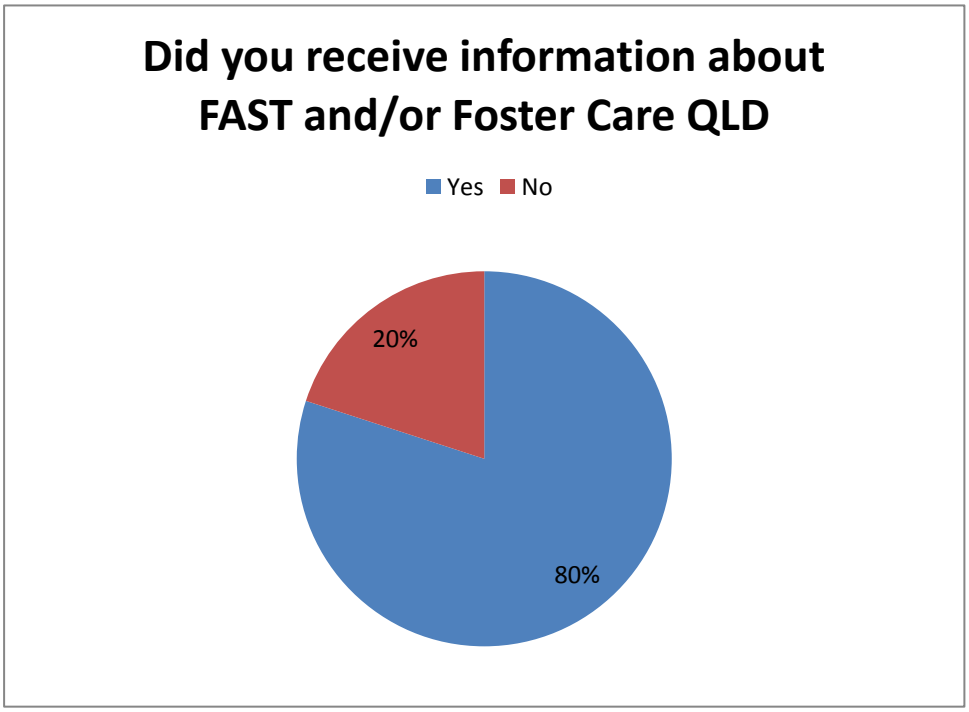
20% of Carers identified that Child Safety discussed the child's cultural support needs but out of 20% they identified that a cultural support plan was not in place.



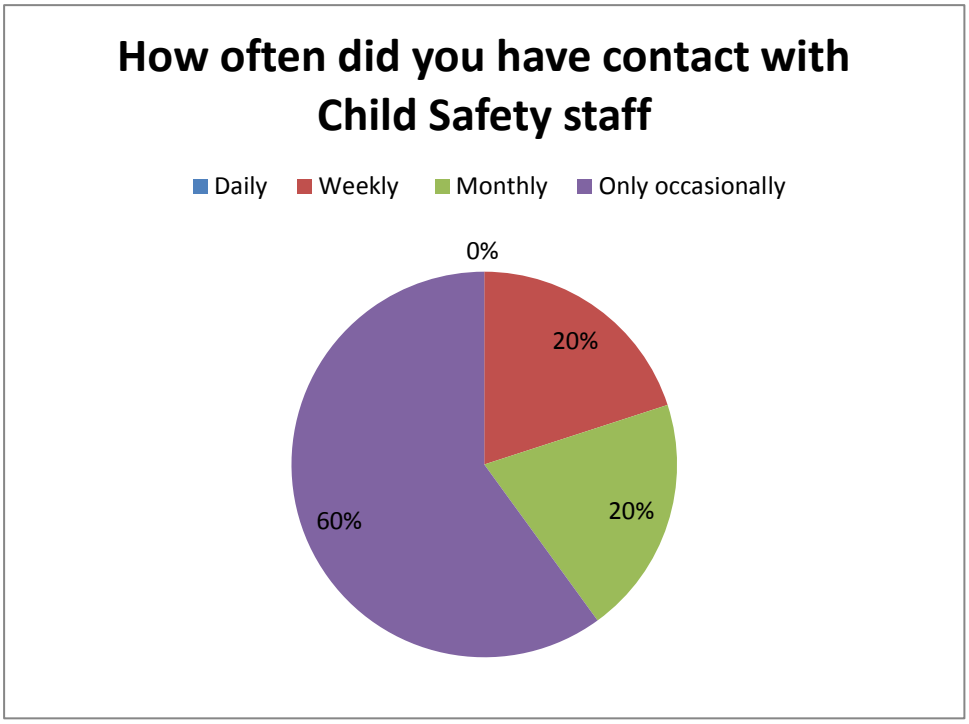
43% of Carers identified that Child Safety discussed the child's educational needs but only 29% had an educational support plan in place.

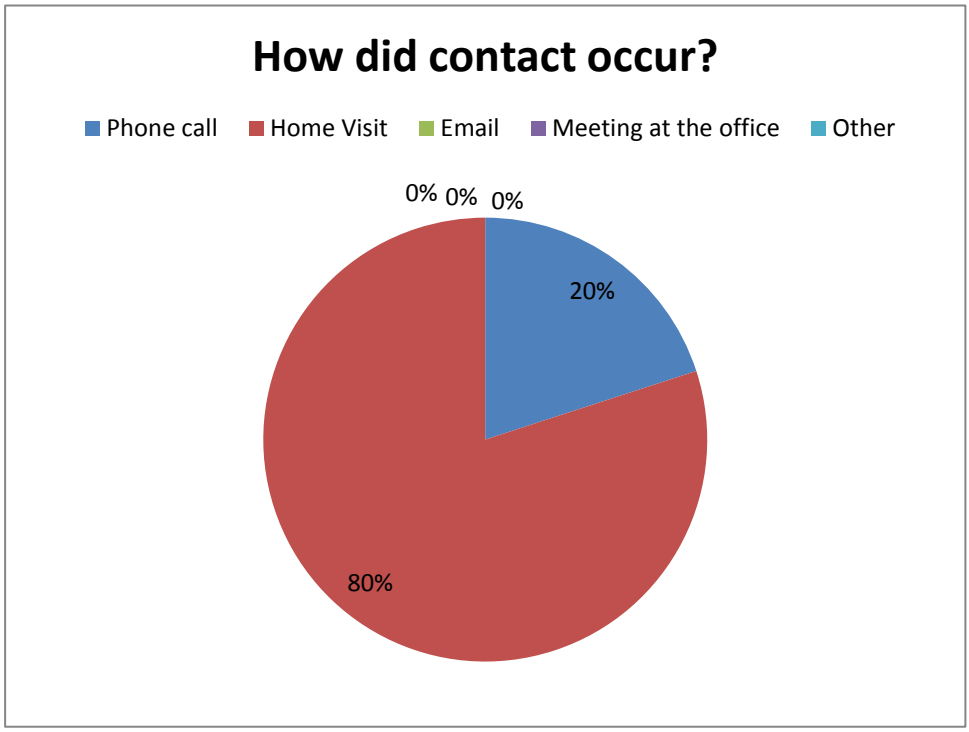


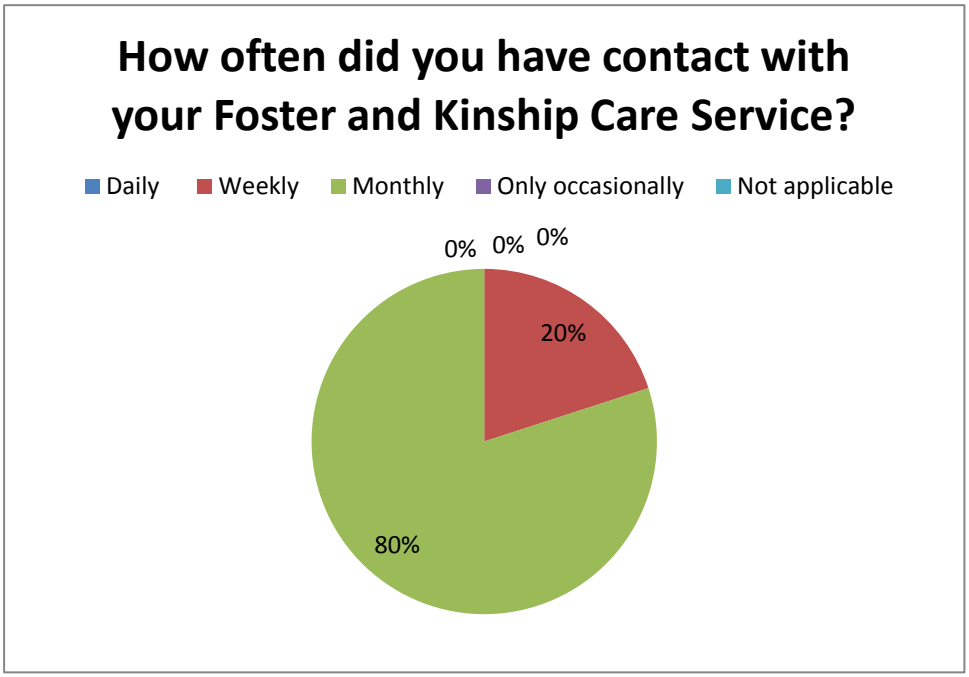
Carers were asked if they had received information regarding FAST Representatives and Foster Care QLD, the table below identifies their responses.

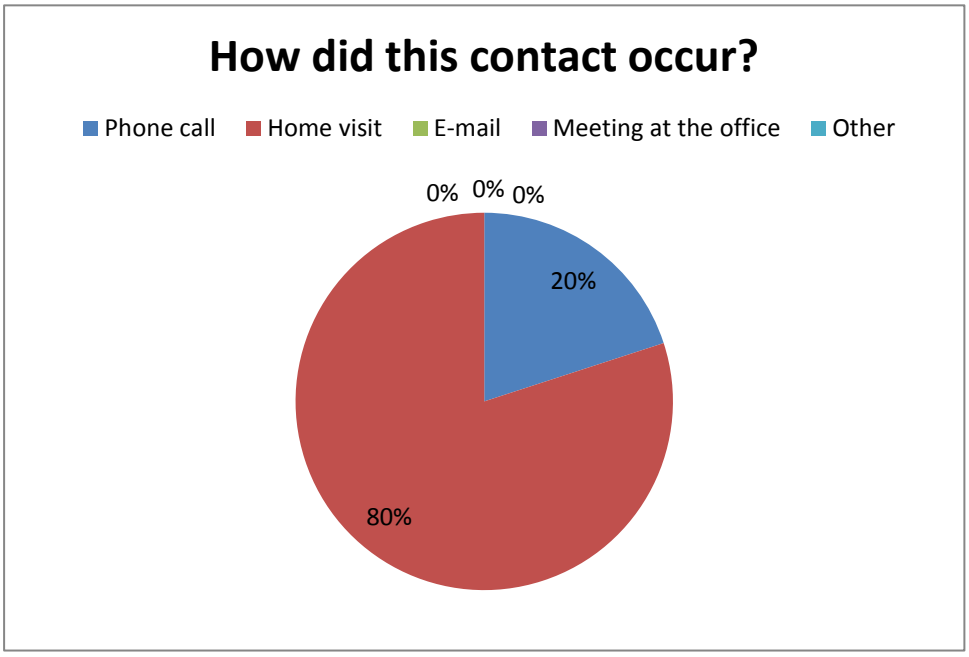


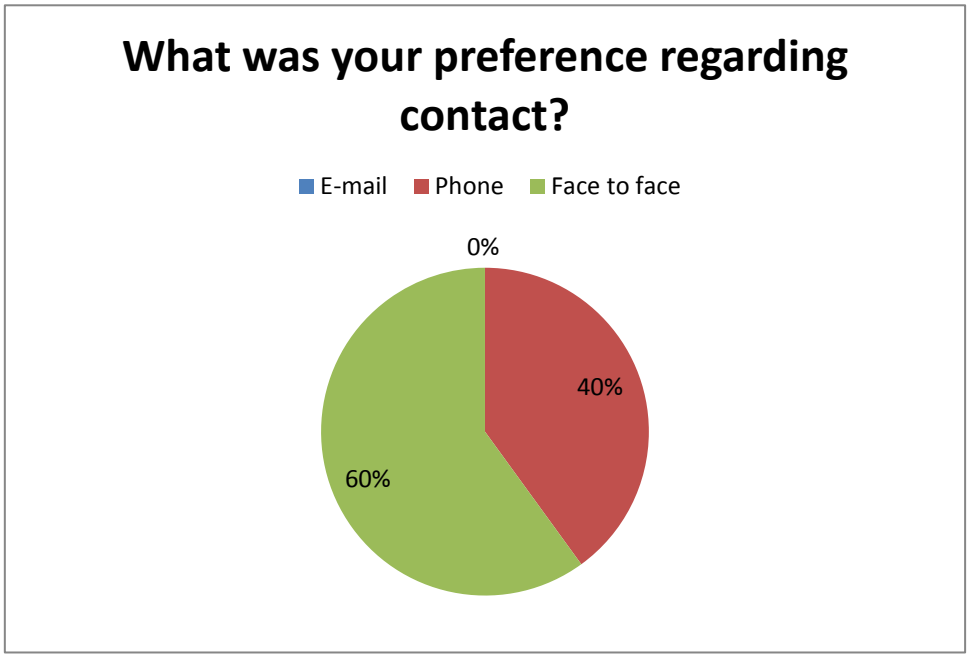
Information relating to contact taking place.

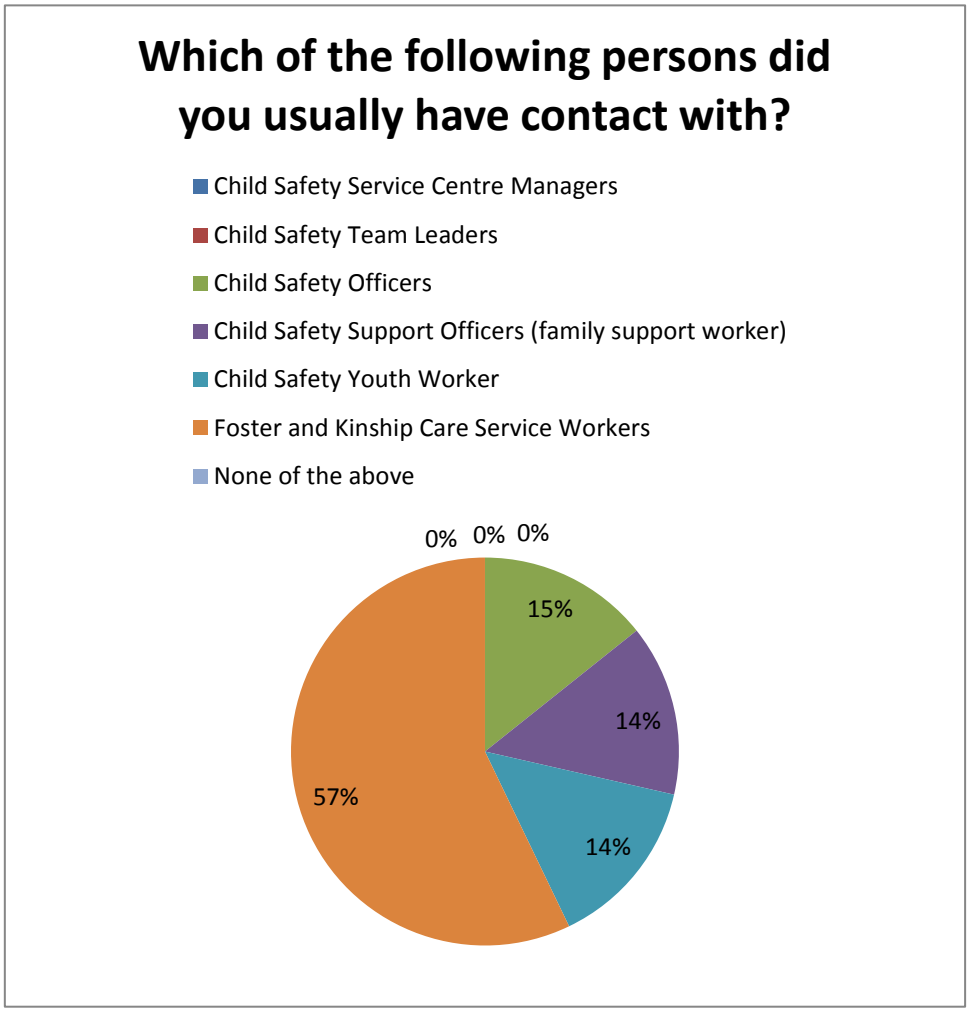





How often did you have contact with your Foster and Kinship Care Service?
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Only occasionally
Not applicable
0%
0%
0%
20%
80%

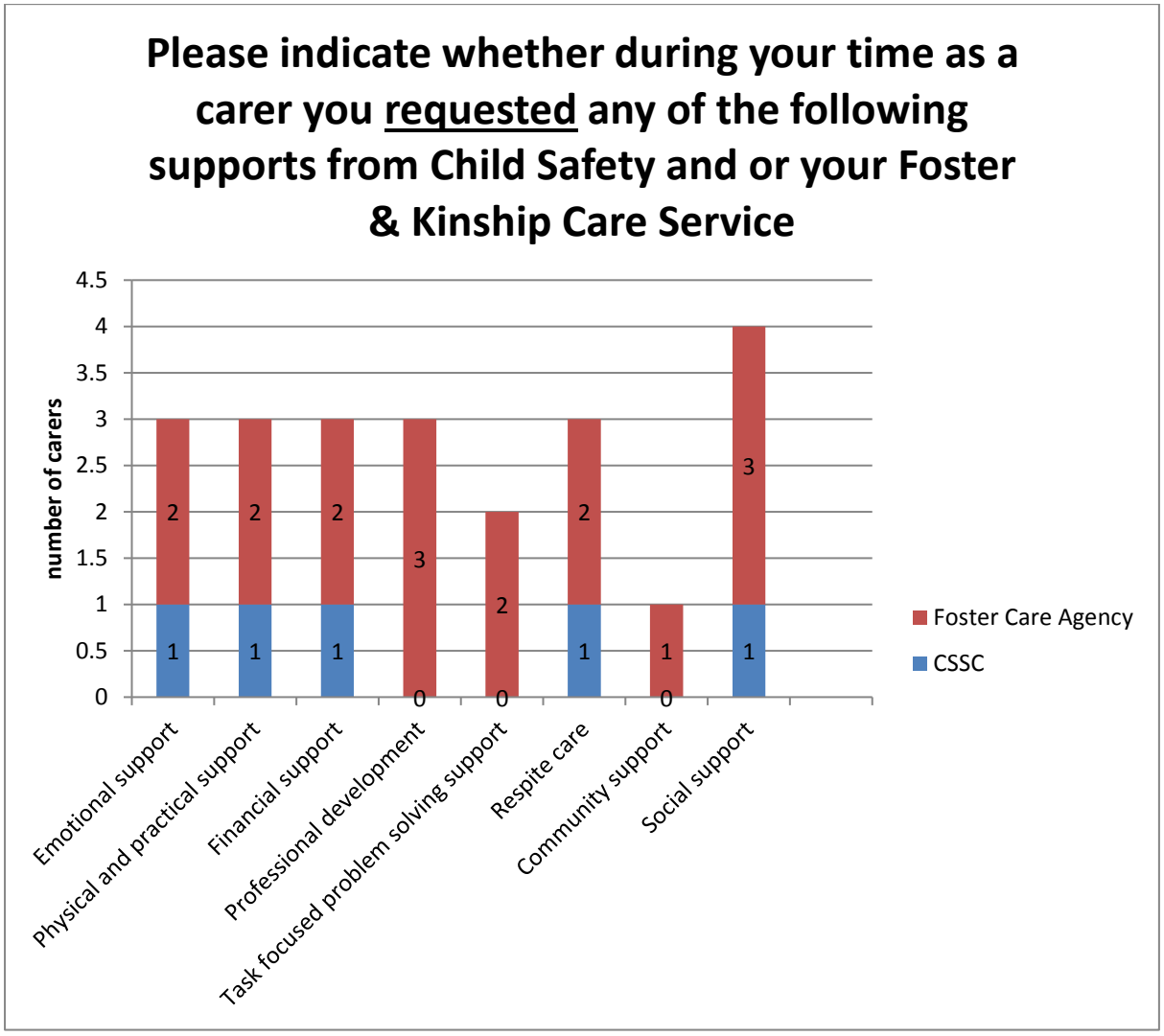

How did this contact occur?
Phone call
Home visit
E-mail
Meeting at the office
Other
0%
0%
0%
20%
80%

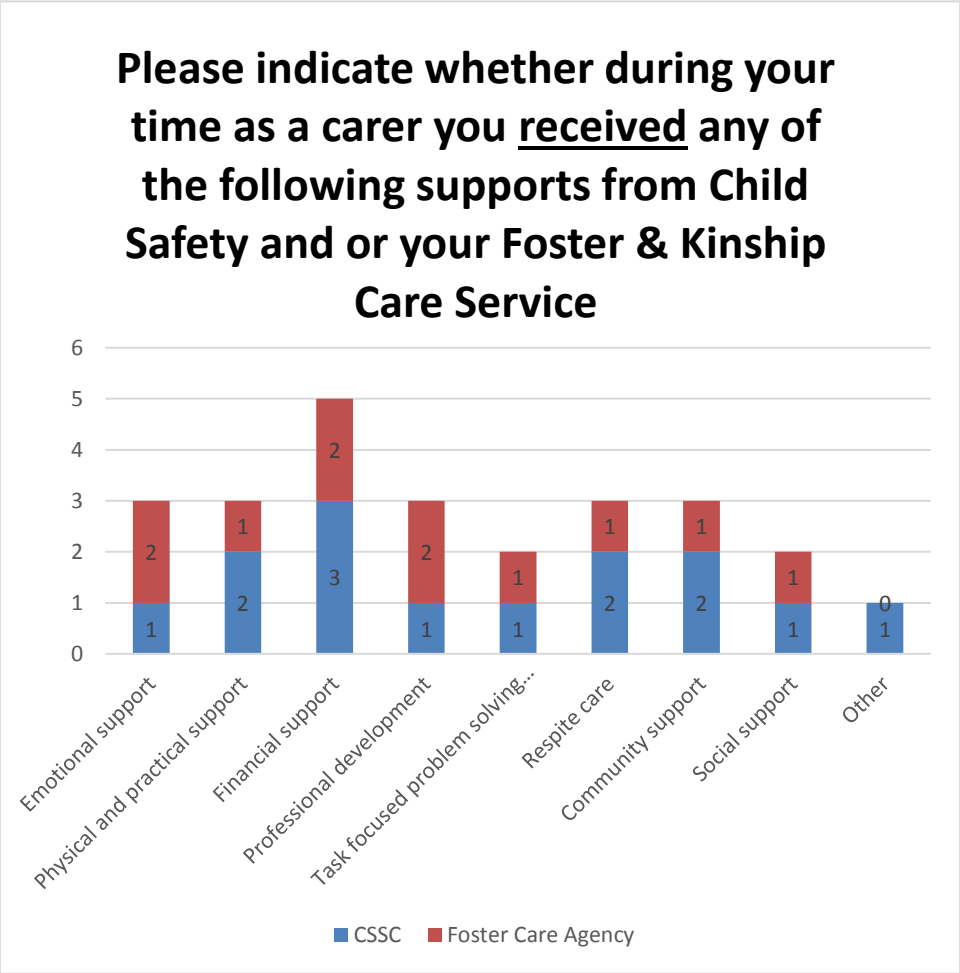

What was your preference regarding contact?
E-mail
Phone
Face to face
0%
40%
60%


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
0%
0%
0%
15%
14%
14%
57%

Question: The Experience of Caring – Support

This section addresses the experience of caring and support received.




Please indicate whether during your time as a carer you received any of the following supports from Child Safety and or your Foster & Kinship Care Service
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Emotional support
Physical and practical support
Financial support
Professional development
Task focused problem solving...
Respite care
Community support
Social support
Other
CSSC
Foster Care Agency

Carers were asked to provide responses to two questions:

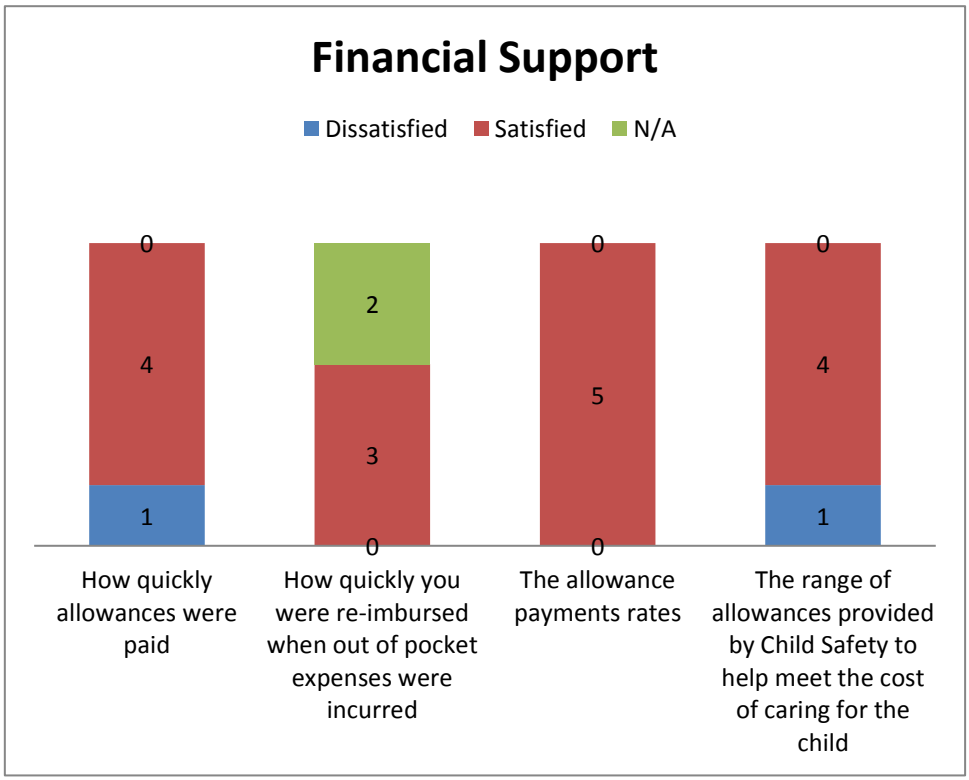
- Did they seek or receive any other form of support, and where was this from?
- Were there other supports you would have liked access to?

Below are the responses supplied:
No
No

Responses to, were there other supports you would have like to access:
No responses provided

Question: The Experience of Caring – Financial Support

Experience of caring in relation to financial support.

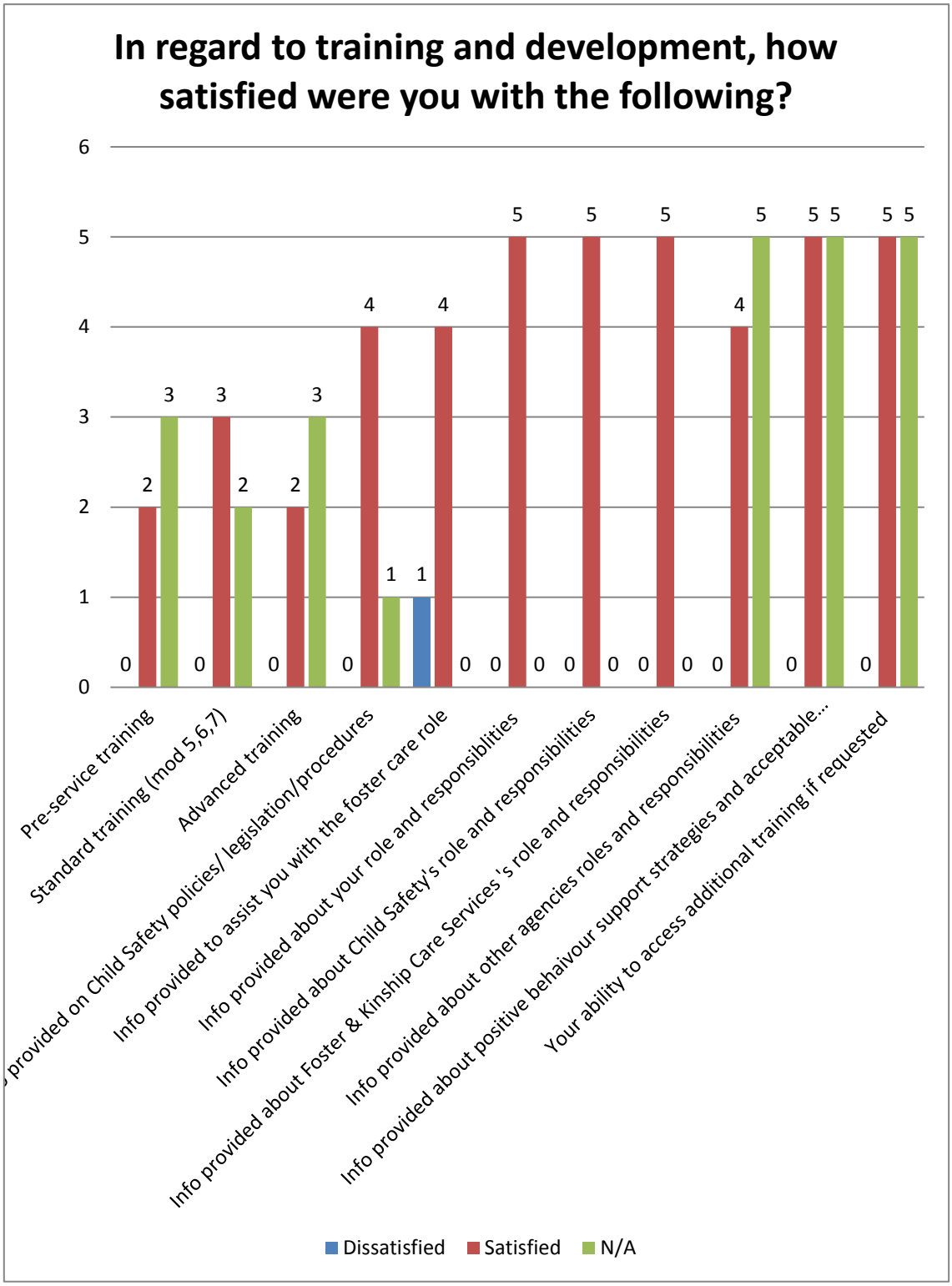


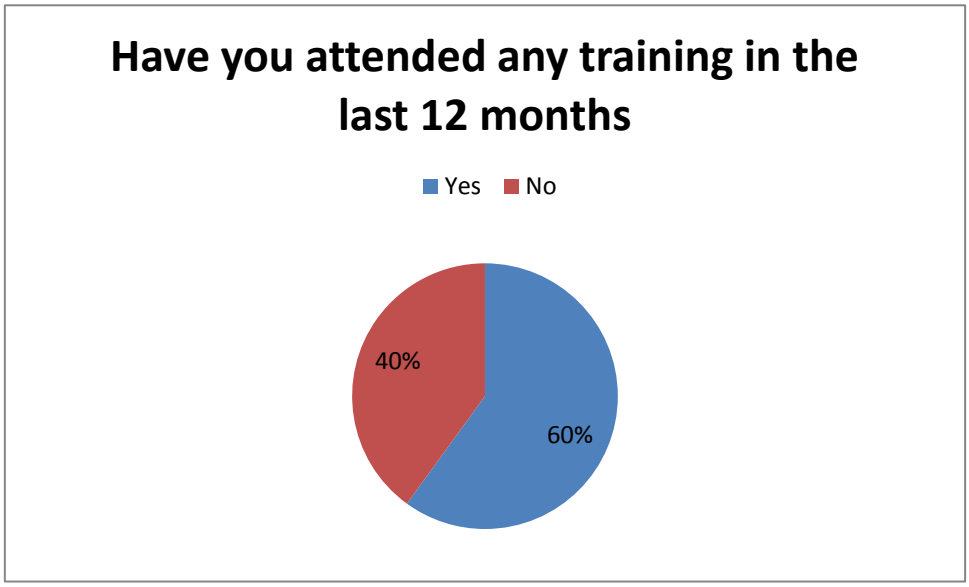
Responses from carers in relation to financial support.

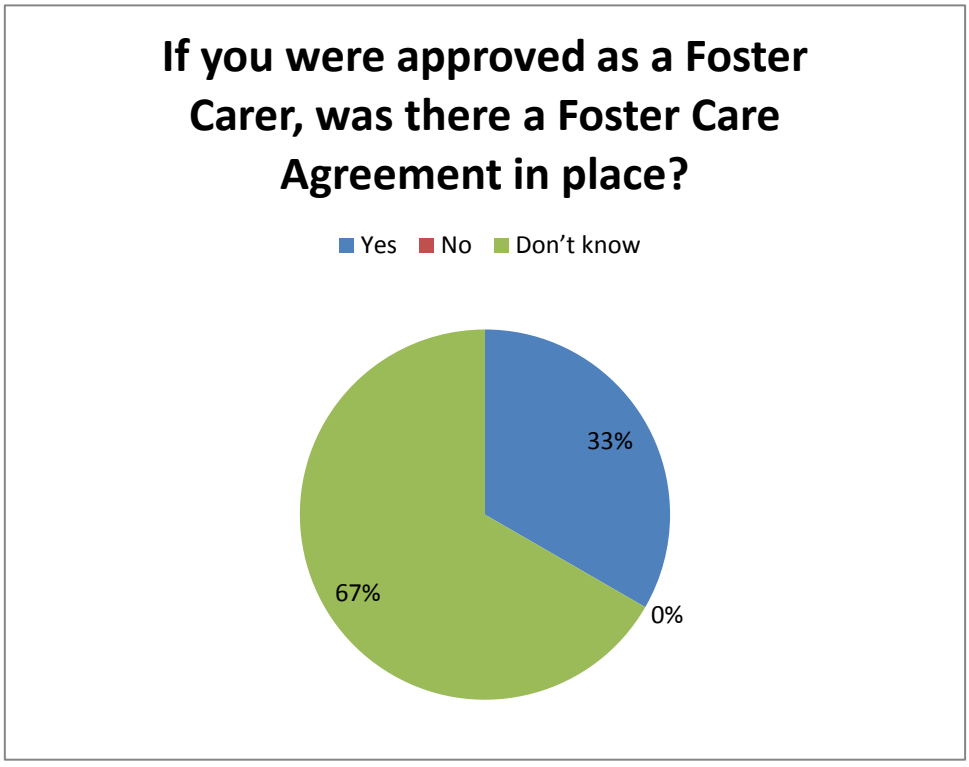
No responses provided

Question: The Experience of Caring – Training and Development

Experience to training and development

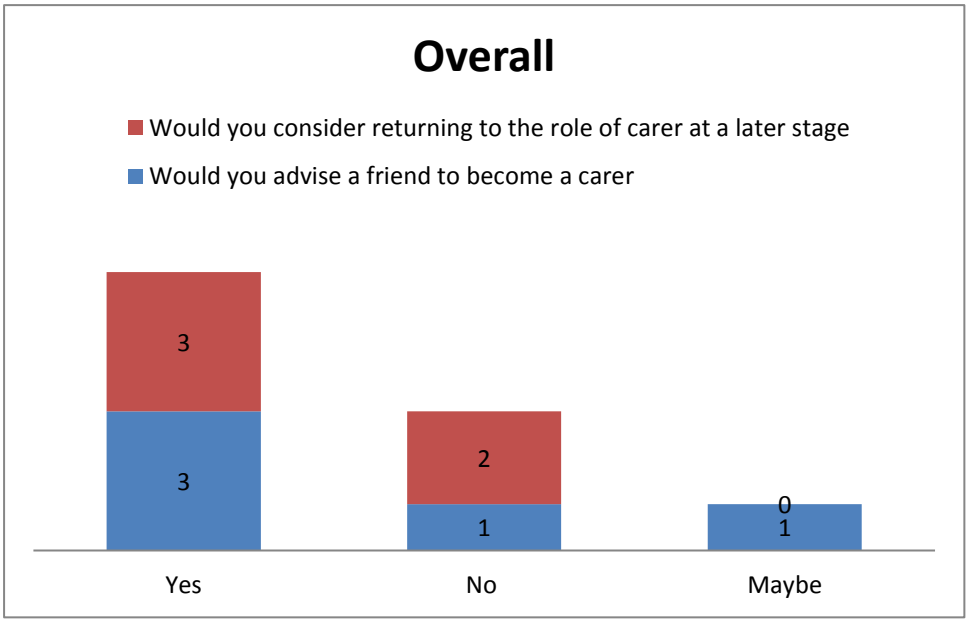



Have you attended any training in the last 12 months
Yes
No
40%
60%


If you were approved as a Foster Carer, was there a Foster Care Agreement in place?
Yes
No
Don't know
33%
67%
0%

Question: Overall Experience

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.

- No because you have to deal with child safety & there cso

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?

- I didn't think they had the right to tell the kids in care just any info without talking to the carer first & just blurting it out after 14 years

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

- Being prepared for the unknown
- dealing with cso's that open there mouth about somethings I have asked them not to,& things that weren't relevant
- Respite kinship care Carer was not happy with his behaviour when returning home
- Contact with our child's mother, very rarely turned up and our child become very disappointed.

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

- Helping the young person
- so my niece could live with family instead of going into the system
- Feeling that helping a child in need
- Seeing our child improve under our care

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

- Open communication
- family support
- Social supports mostly
- Our case worker was excellent. The agency were a great organisation to be involved with.

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

- More connection between experienced carers and inexperienced carers
- to get better cso's who don't blurt things out
- Not sure
- More support from child safety service centre, mainly seeing the child on a regular (monthly) basis, this didn't happen.

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

- She felt her time as a kinship carer was good apart from what occurred one weekend
- this has torn my family apart
- No