



speaking out for young people in care

Young people's views

Supporting information from young people in care and care leavers for the Children and Young People Bill - from young people with experience of being in care in Scotland

‘A special thank-you to all of the young people who took the time to share their views and their experiences of being in care, as part of this consultation. We are indebted to them, and this report gives a detailed account of what they said. They deserve to be heard.’

Duncan Dunlop, Chief Executive, Who Cares? Scotland

Contents

Overview	4
1. Who we talked to	5
2 <i>Their</i> views on <i>their</i> care experience	8
3 <i>Their</i> views on service planning.....	14
4 <i>Their</i> views on child's plan / care plan	16
5 <i>Their</i> views on children's rights.....	17
6 <i>Their</i> views on support after leaving care.....	18
7 <i>Their</i> views on foster care.....	20
8 Concluding remarks on <i>their</i> views	23
Appendix 1: Children and Young People Bill – questions for looked after children, young people and care leavers.....	25

Overview

These are *their* views; based on *their* experiences; told with *their* voice.

Who Cares? Scotland directly consulted with **116** young people in care and care leavers, to gather their views on the proposals contained in the **Children and Young People Bill** (referred to as the Bill hereafter). It is fundamental to the success of any new legislative provisions aiming to deliver better outcomes for all of Scotland's children and young people, that their voice is both sought and heard in all planning and services, which affect their life path. We believe that this is particularly paramount for looked after children, young people and care leavers. The Bill categories its provisions into themes; and based on these themes, we developed a series of questions that allowed young people to give us their individual views on areas which we know matter to them. See appendix 1 for the full set of questions which young people were asked. To summarise, we captured the following information from the young people.

Figure 1: Capturing views of our young people

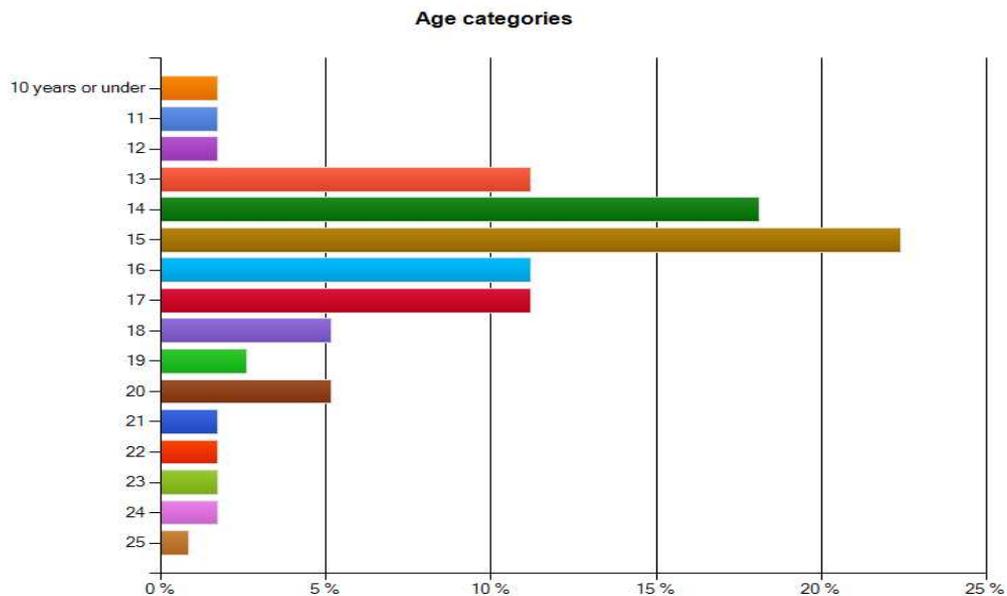
Context:	Age
	Gender
	Ethnic origin
	Current accommodation type
	LA care provider
	LA area they currently live in
Their experience:	Their views on what would have made life better for them before going into care
	Their views on what would have made their life better whilst in care
	Their views on what would have made their life better upon leaving care
Service planning:	What professionals they work with and why
	What professionals they like working with and why
Child / care plan:	If they have a children's / care plan
	If they are involved in that plan
	If they think there should only be one plan for their care
	If they think young people should have a voice in decisions that affect them
	If they view children and young people's rights are important
	If they know what types of rights they have
	How they knew about their rights
	If they think they should know more about their rights
	Examples of when knowing about their rights helped them whilst in care
Support after care:	If they think support after leaving care would help
	If they think support after leaving care should stop at 25 years old
	What type of support they think would help after leaving care and who they think should provide it
Foster care:	If they felt part of their foster care family
	If they think foster carers should have a minimum set of qualifications to look after them
	If they think foster carers should get a minimum payment to look after them
	If they think there should be a maximum limit on number of children in a foster care placement at one time and how many that should be

This report will present the views of the young people and highlight areas where they feel the provisions in the Bill need further consideration or revision to truly place their views and experiences at the centre of their care planning.

1. Who we talked to

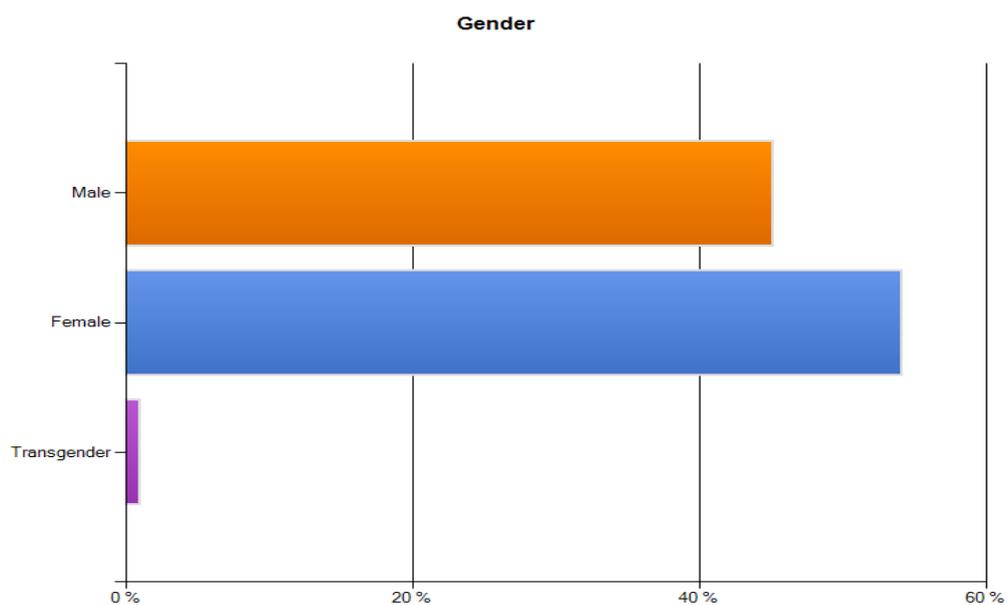
We spoke to 116 young people in total, with the following age breakdown.

Figure 1: Young people by age



We spoke to slightly more females than males and one transgender young person.

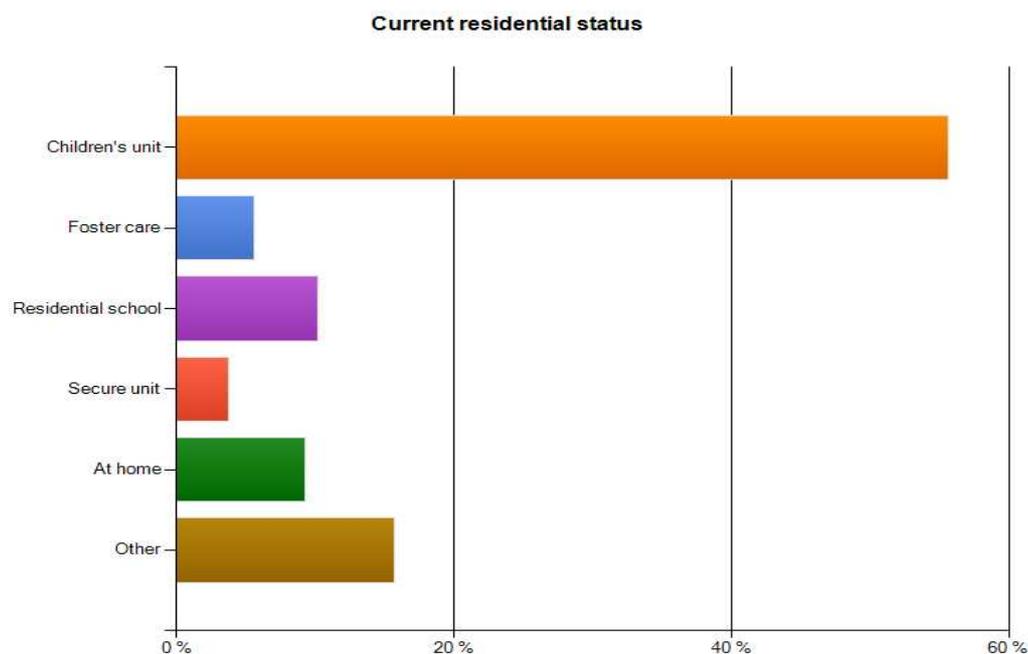
Figure 2: Young people by gender



90% of the young people classed themselves as **Scottish White** with the other 10% **Other UK White**.

The majority of young people consulted reside in a **children's unit (56%)**.

Figure 3: Young people by current residential status



Those categorised as **other**, include a residential status of **homeless accommodation, own accommodation and hospital**.

We spoke to young people from across Scotland and asked them which authority has responsibility for providing their care. With the exception of **Dumfries and Galloway; East Lothian, East Renfrewshire; Orkney Islands; Scottish Borders and Shetland Islands** we have young people with care experience of every other Scottish local authority represented in this consultation.

We also asked young people which local authority they currently live in. There were young people from **13** local authorities who were living in a different local authority area than the one responsible for their care. These are shown below:

Figure 4: Local authority responsible v local authority placed

Local authority responsible for care	Local authority areas placed in
Aberdeenshire	2 in Fife 1 in Aberdeenshire
East Dunbartonshire	1 in Renfrewshire

	1 in Dumfries and Galloway
Edinburgh	3 in Edinburgh 1 in Fife
Falkirk	1 in East Ayrshire 1 in East Lothian 1 in Fife 1 in Highland
Glasgow	5 in Glasgow 2 in Fife
North Ayrshire	2 in North Ayrshire 1 in Argyll and Bute 6 in East Ayrshire 1 in Stirling
South Ayrshire	2 in North Ayrshire
South Lanarkshire	9 in South Lanarkshire 1 in Stirling
Stirling	1 in Stirling 1 in Fife 2 in Glasgow
West Dunbartonshire	4 in West Dunbartonshire 1 in Stirling
West Lothian	1 in Glasgow
Western Isles	5 in Western Isles 1 in Renfrewshire

2 Their views on their care experience

We asked the young people to answer openly and honestly on **what they think would have made their life better before going into care**. Most of the responses can be grouped into the following categories:

- **Support** **16%**
 - Parent's behaviour 1%
- **Nothing – all was OK** **16%**
 - Family support levels 4%
 - Social work relationships 3%
- **Communication and preparation** **13%**
 - Type of care 1%
 - Advocacy 1%
 - Own behaviour 8%

Young people said they would have liked **more support** to prevent having to go into care or to deal with having to go in to care; and several expressed that more **family support** for their parent/s would also have helped. They also showed a desire to have been **communicated to better** and to be **better prepared** for going into care – with some young people not understanding why, for instance, they could not say good-bye to their friends. Some young people believe their **behaviour** resulted in them being taken into care. These young people seem to blame themselves and wish, for example, that they had gone to school more. Some examples of what young people said in relation to the top categories of responses are shown below, and reflect some **of their feelings on what would have made their life better before they went into care**:

Support



Communication and preparation



We asked the young people to answer openly and honestly on **what they think would have made their life better whilst in care.** Most of their responses can be grouped into the following categories:

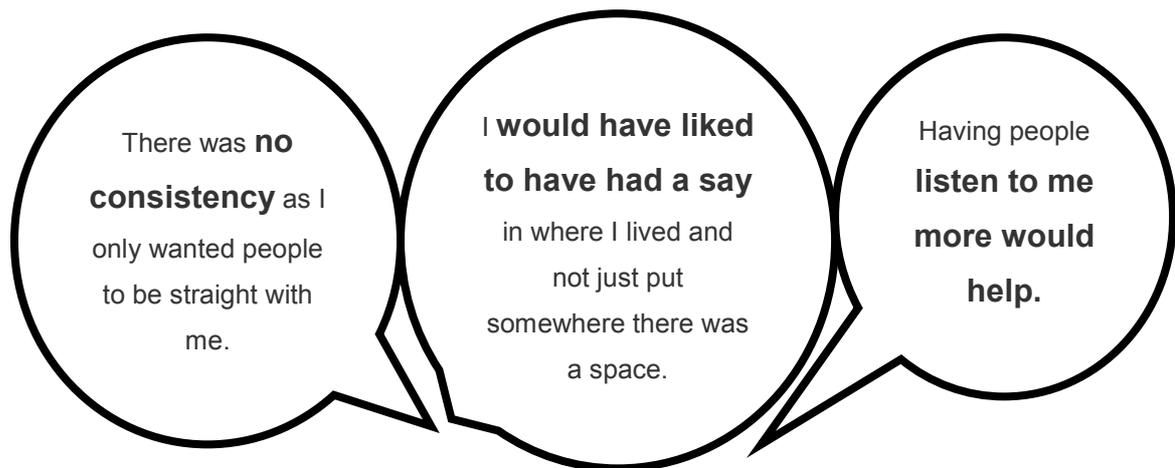
- Advocacy support 3%
- **Care environment 28%**
- Early intervention 1%
- **Family contact 8%**
- **Listened to 11%**
- Location 5%
- Nothing 6%
- Preparation 3%
- Social interaction 6%
- Social work relationship 3%

Young people expressed more concerns about their **care environment** than anything else in relation to their experience. Particular concerns were raised in relation to **bullying; size of residential units; staff; the amount of rules and lack of freedom.** Several also said they would like to be **listened to** more and to have had more **family contact.** There were also issues raised from some young people on the lack of **preparation** they felt they got in care to deal with leaving care. The **location** of their care accommodation was also judged by some young people as being too far away from where they used to live – and not being around friends and family as a result. Some examples of what young people said in relation to the top categories of responses are shown below:

Care environment



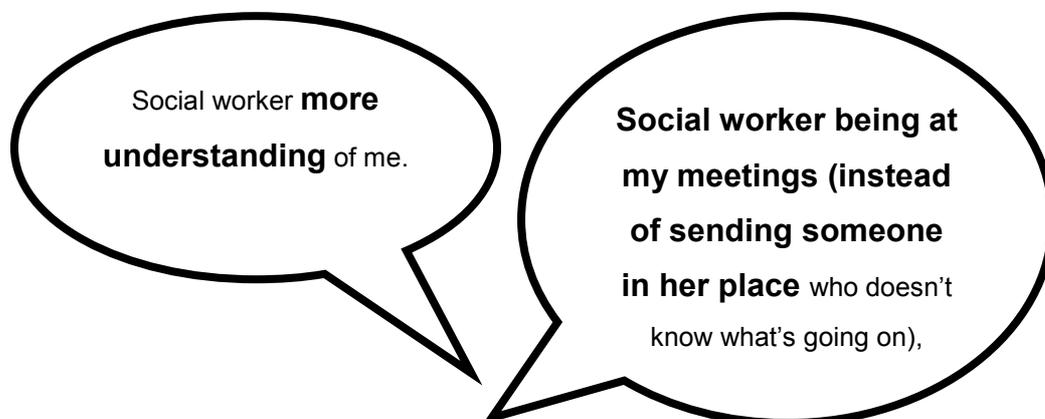
Listened to



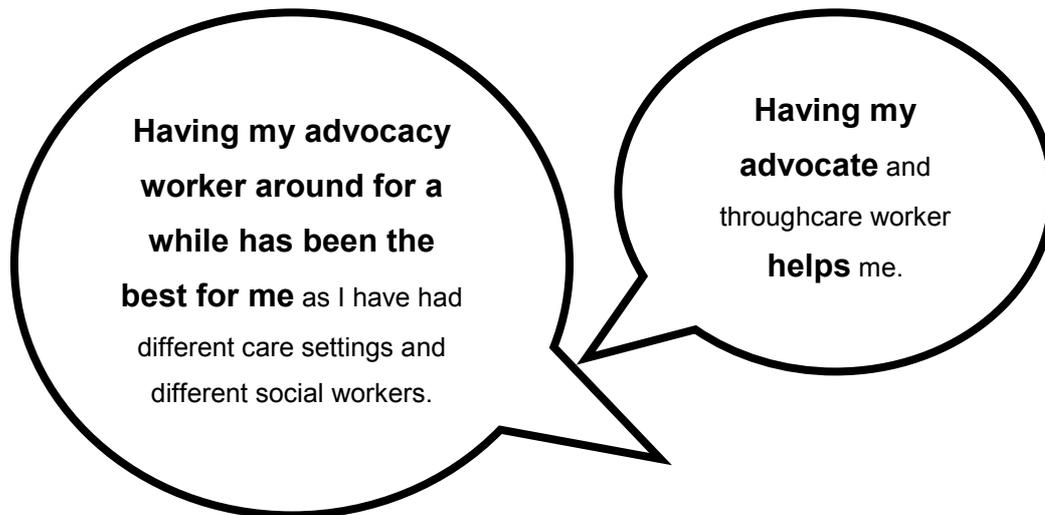
Family contact



Some young people had some views to share on **their relationship with social workers**, and which warrant being heard.



There were some direct views relating to the role of the **advocate** which the young people worked with.

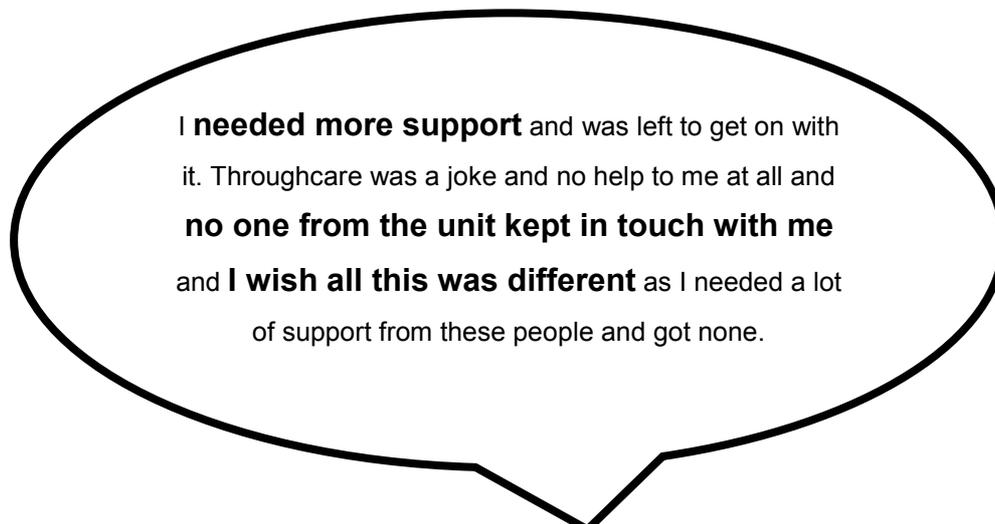


We asked the young people to answer openly and honestly on **what they think would have made their life better when they left care**. The responses can be grouped into the following main categories:

- Communication 2%
- Care environment 2%
- Listened to 4%
- **Support 25%**
- **Advice / guidance 10%**

Since this question did not apply to all of the young people consulted, many answered **not sure**. From those who were able to give an opinion, the majority of their views related to the **support** and **advice and guidance** which they felt should be given to young people before they leave care, to prepare them for leaving. Specific comments which provide insight into these views are shown below:

Support



More support. It all happened too quickly. **I went from lots of people in care to just me in a flat with a worker visiting me once a week.**

In the area I hadn't chosen; **I wasn't ready**, I had been in care all my life. **It should have happened more slowly.**

I wish I had been **taught more about the real world**, like affording food etc and living on my own.

Advice and guidance

More outreach support and help with benefits.

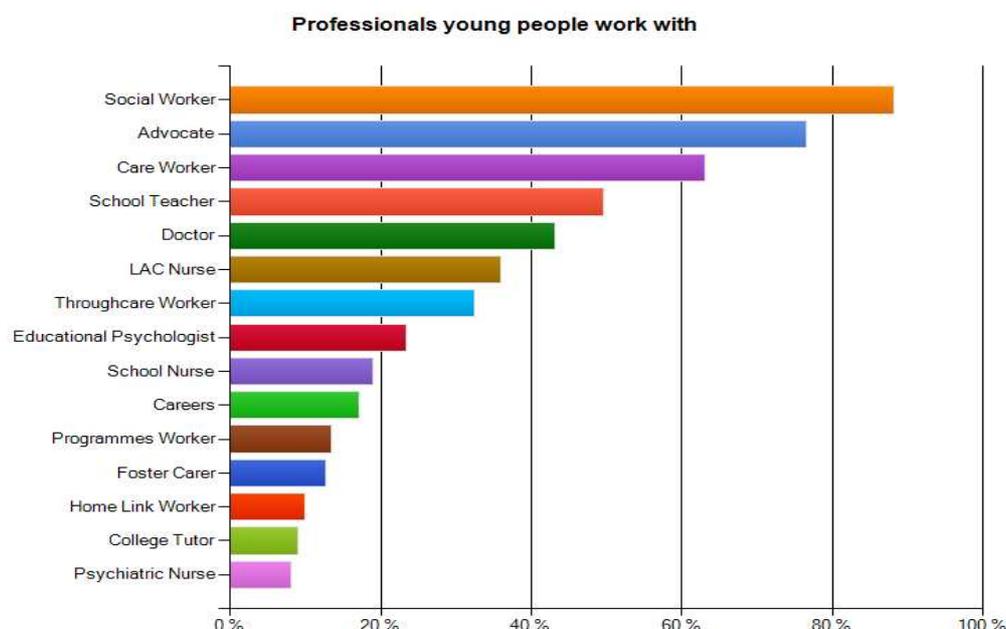
To **know about** organisations such as Who Cares? and Victim Support.

I lost my first tenancy because I was scared to stay by myself at night time. For staff to have continued to support me and keep in touch with me as I'd lived with them for over 3 years. Also **I got kicked out the unit with black bags** and again **no preparation or goodbyes.**

3 Their views on service planning

Young people were asked **what professionals they work with**. Most young people gave multiple responses to this question.

Figure 5: Professionals young people work with



Unsurprisingly, **social worker** had the highest response rate. **Advocate**, **care worker** and **school teacher** also had high responses. There were some **other** responses, and these included **women's aid**; **psychiatric doctor** and **family support service**. We then asked young people **if they knew why they worked with these professionals**. Since **social worker** and **advocate** are the top two responses, it is helpful to understand if the young people know why they work with these professionals. For those who work with **social workers**, the following responses on why were captured:

- **As I am in care / because I have to** 38%
- **To get support** 44%
- **Not sure** 5%

It seems that almost half of the young people consulted knew social workers were there to **provide support**; but almost a quarter felt working with them **had to happen because they are in care**. Young people were asked which professionals they like working with. **Advocates (37%)** and **care workers (25%)** were the highest choices. The following reasons were given by young people as to why they like working with **advocates** and **care workers**.

Advocates

Because they help me in ways other professionals can't. They listen without making judgements to help me to be heard.

Helpful, **supportive** and get your views across.

My advocate because she is really **supportive of me and gives me good advice** and helps me put my views to others.

Because I am actually **supported** and they invite me to be involved in other things that's going on and I sometimes get paid for my involvement and they got me into other things and **gave me opportunities.**

Because they are people who actually listen to you and **they're easy to talk to and get your views across to.**

Advocate **because it's my choice** and she listens to me.

Care workers

Care staff. Because they **listen to me** more.

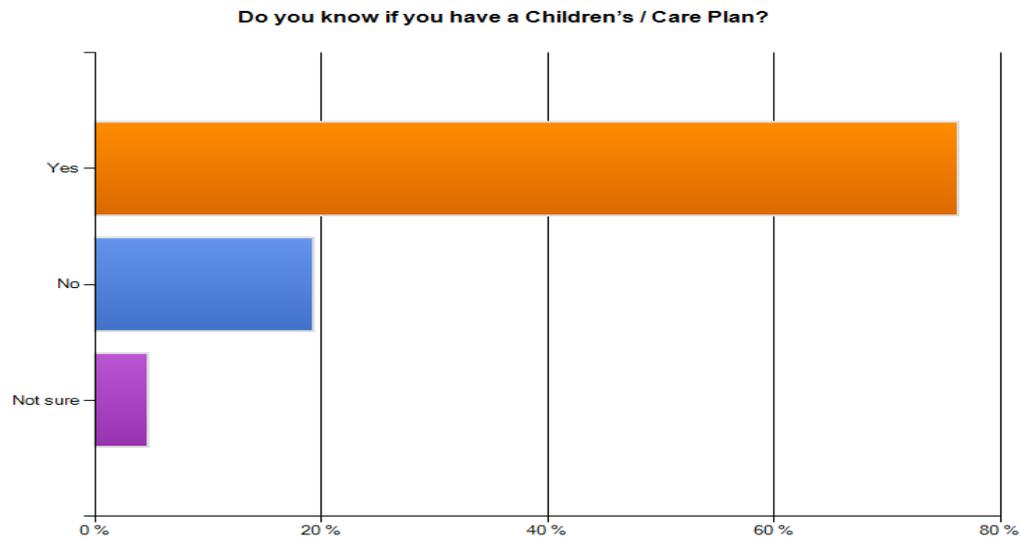
Because I **get along with them** best.

Care worker **because I see them a lot.**

4 Their views on child's plan / care plan

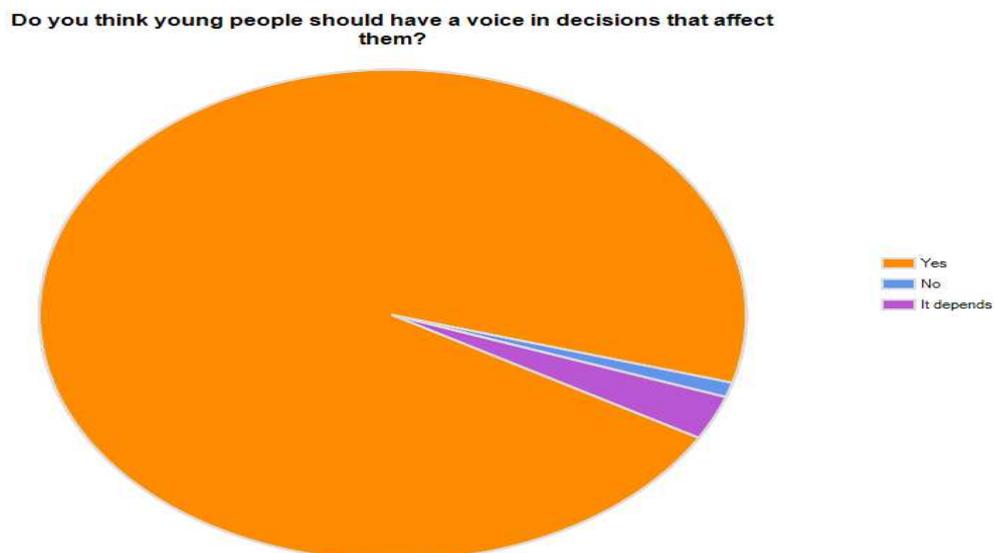
Young people were asked if they had a child's plan / care plan; most answered **yes**.

Figure 6: Do the young people have a care plan?

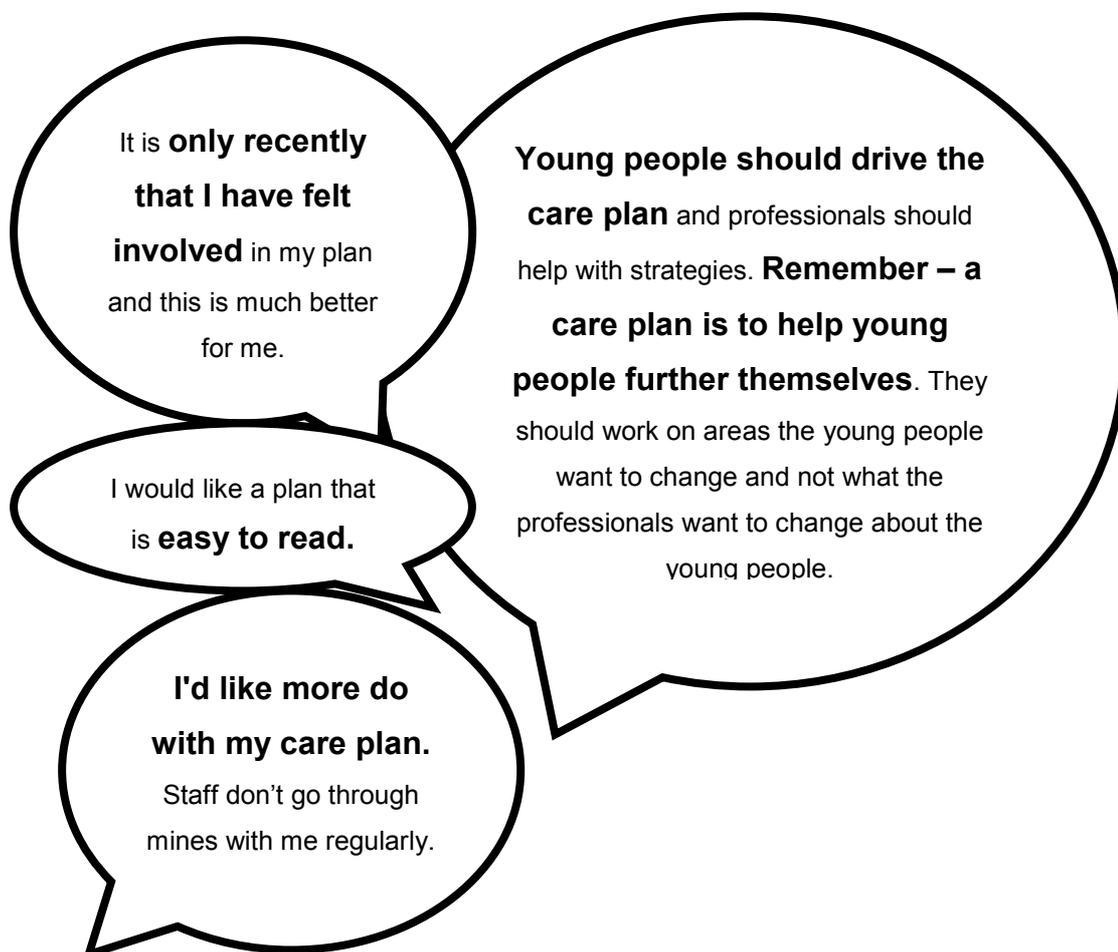


Young people who had a care plan were asked if they were involved in it. **72%** of young people said **yes**; **28%** said **no**. When asked if they felt there should **only be one care / child's plan in place which all professionals work to**, **73%** said **yes** and **15%** said **no**. The remaining answered **not sure**. When asked **if they think young people should be involved in the decisions that affect them**, the response was overwhelmingly **yes**.

Figure 7: Should young people be involved in decisions affecting them?



From those young people who **said they should be involved in their care plan** and the decisions that affect them, some comments were captured which are notable and some of them are shown below:



5 Their views on children's rights

All young people consulted believe that **rights are important**. When asked if they knew what rights they had, **63%** said **yes**; **30%** said **some of them** and **7%** said **no**. From those that answered **yes** or **some of them**, young people explained why they knew about these. **From these young people, most knew about their rights because of a Who Cares? Scotland advocate (58%)**. Of those young people who did not know about their rights, **89% felt they should have been told**.

The young people who knew about all or some of their rights were asked if there were times whilst in care when knowing about these rights helped them. **78% of young people said yes**, and the following examples give some of their reasons why:



6 *Their* views on support after leaving care

All young people consulted were asked if they **think it would help / helped to have continued support upon leaving care**. Most young people said **yes (87%)**. When asked if this help should stop when they reach **25 years old**, responses were split between **yes (37%)**; **no (26%)** and **depends on the young person's circumstances (42%)**.

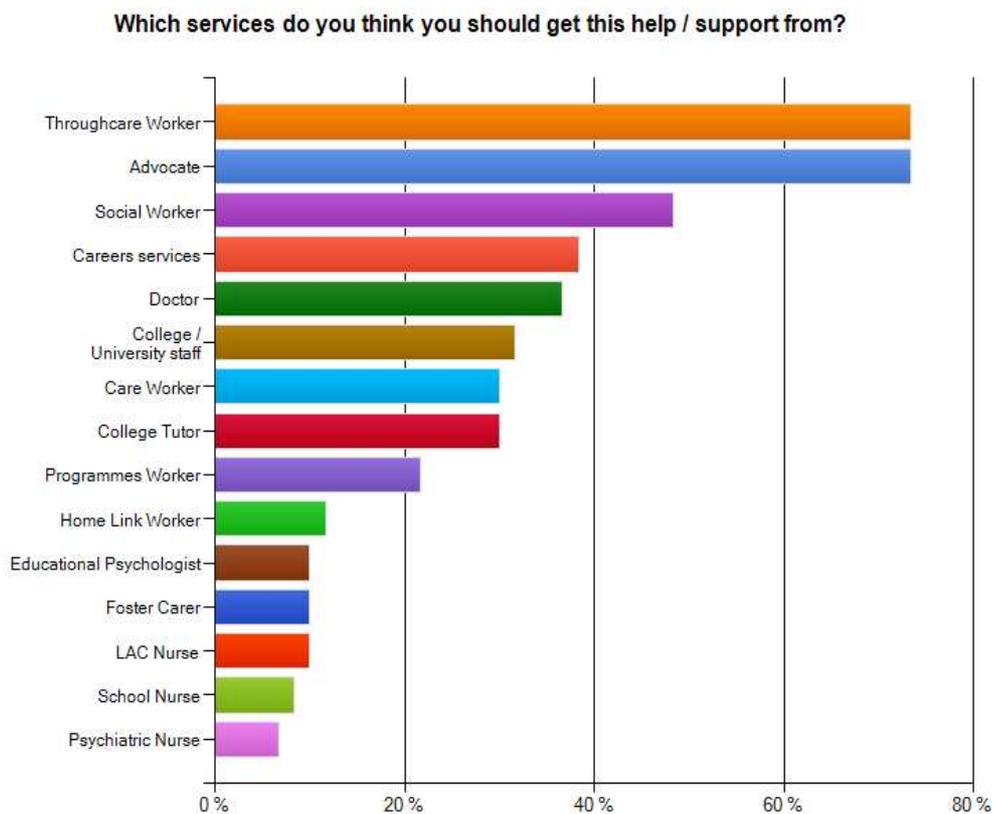
They were asked **what type of support young people should get access to upon leaving care**. Many young people gave multiple answers to this, and the type of support recommended can be categorised as follows:

- **Housing support** 23%
- Getting a job 11%
- **Social work** 20%

- **Advocacy** **23%**
- Mental health 3%
- **Throughcare** **30%**
- Career guidance 8%
- Care worker 10%
- Financial 12%
- **Someone to talk to** **15%**

The young people gave the following responses, when asked which professionals should provide these services when they leave care:

Figure 8: Which services should provide support to care leavers?



The young people gave several responses to this answer, and **the majority believe a throughcare worker; advocate and social worker should provide the support.**

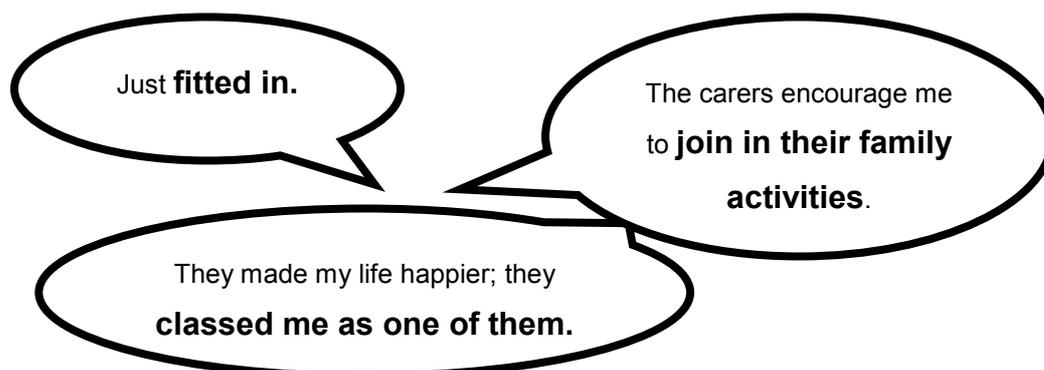
7 Their views on foster care

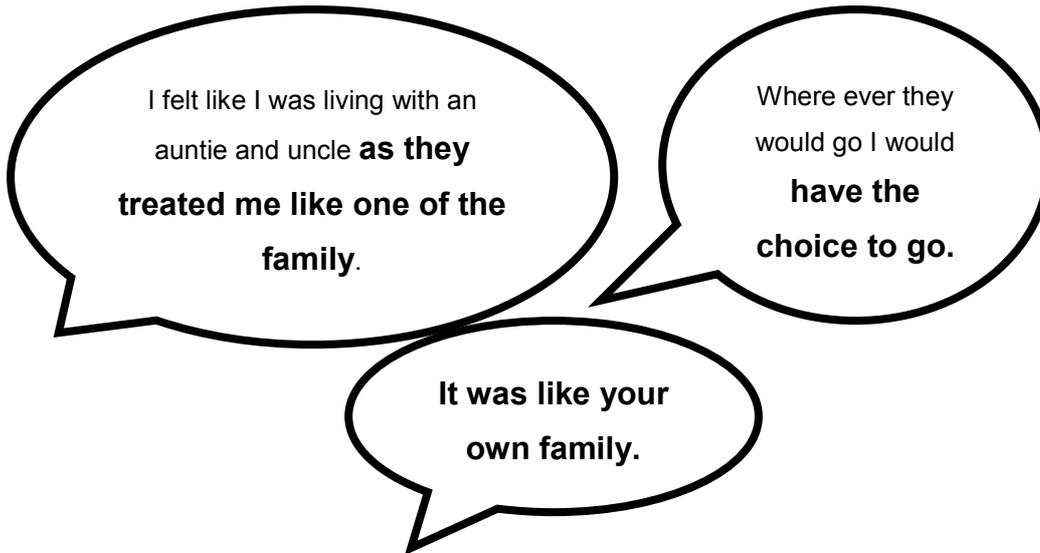
From the young people consulted, many had experience of being in foster care. They were asked if, whilst in foster care placements, they felt part of the foster carers' family. **42%** said **yes** and **42%** said **no**, with the remaining answering **some of them**.

Of those young people who answered **no**, the following explanations were given:



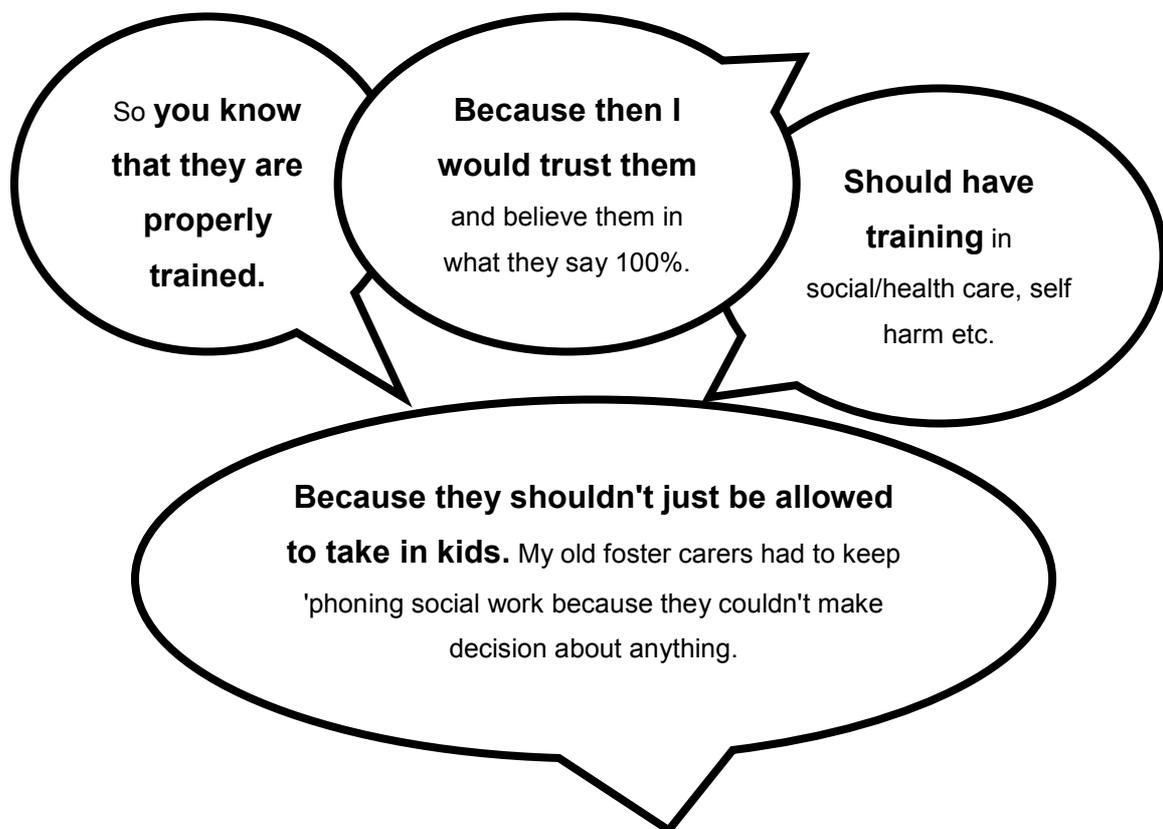
Of those young people who answered **yes**, the following explanations were given:



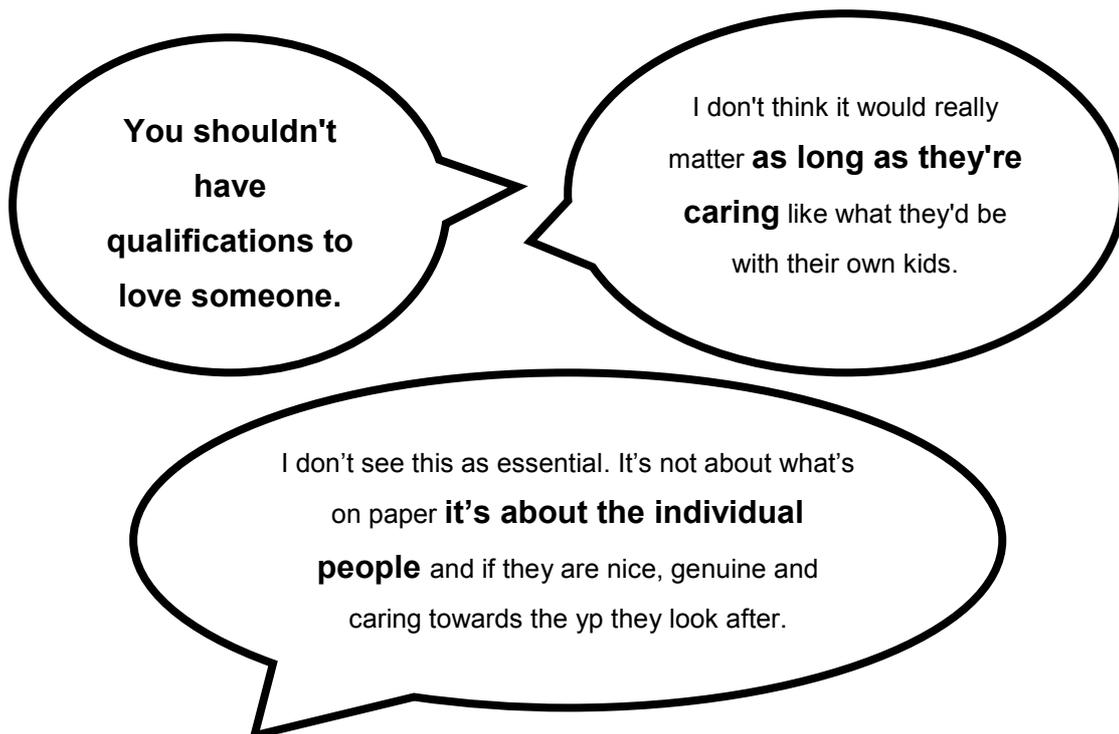


When the young people were asked if they **thought foster carers should have qualifications to look after children and young people, 2/3 said yes** and 1/3 said no.

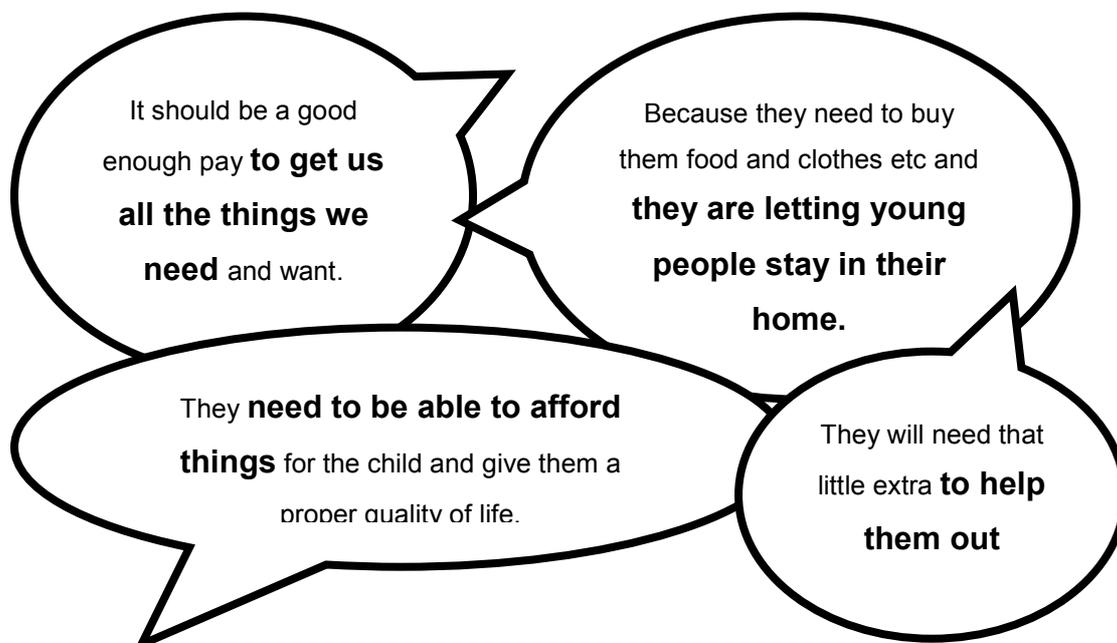
Those who answered **yes** gave reasons, which included the following:



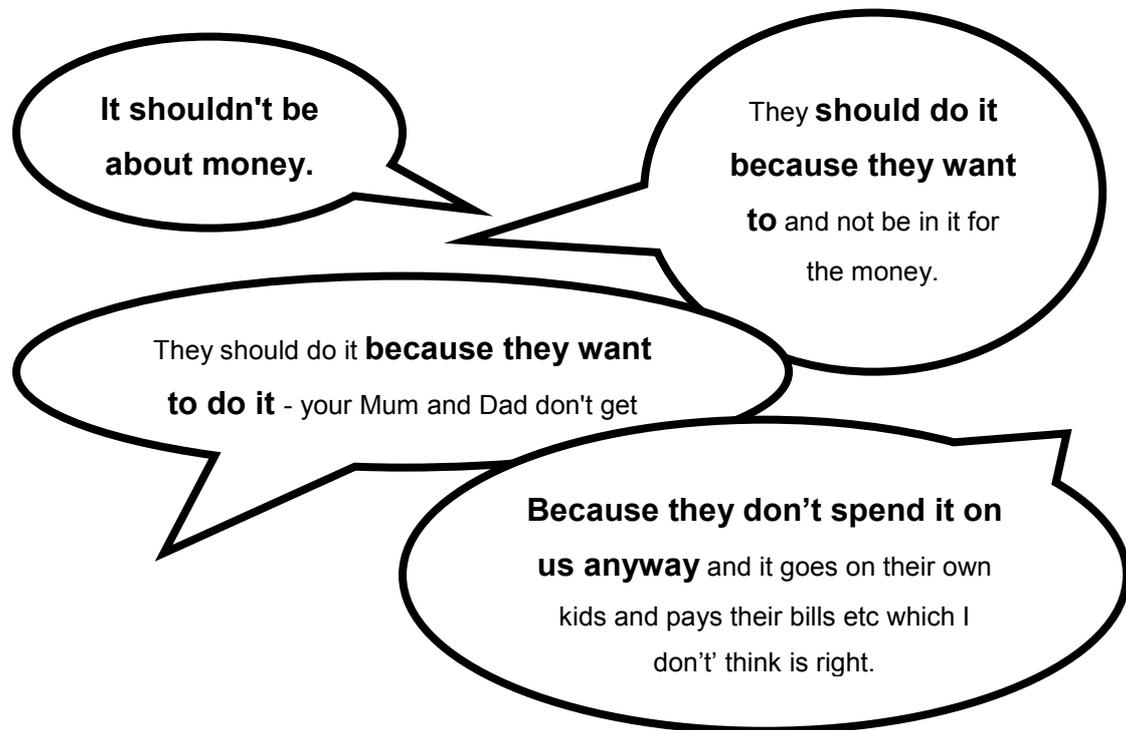
Those who answered **no** gave reasons, which included the following:



82% of young people consulted believe that **foster carers should receive a minimum payment to look after them.** Some of the reasons for this are shown below:



Those who did answer **no** cited the following reasons why foster carers should not receive a minimum payment:



Young people were asked if they think there should be **a maximum number of children in a foster care placement at the one time** and **80%** said **yes**. When asked what that number should be, the highest response was for **3 children (42%)**, followed by **4 children (27%)** and **2 children (24%)**.

8 Concluding remarks on *their* views

It is clear that those young people consulted, want to be **heard**. They want to be **asked** what they **feel, think and want** and they would like to be **listened to**. Over and above this, most of them just want to be treated like all other children – and be **loved** and **respected** for who they are, regardless of whether they live in a foster placement, a residential unit or any other care setting.

They want **help** and **guidance** to **prepare** for life **in care** and life **after care**. They want to know how to **cope** with their circumstances, and how to **realise their full**

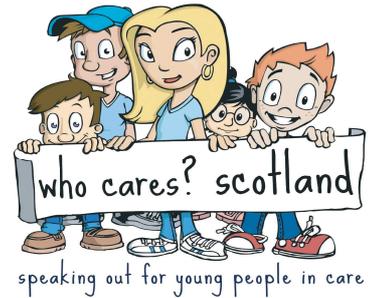
potential. They want to **work**, or get an **education** and know how to **manage their own home** – including help on how to manage financially, when they leave care.

These young people do not seem to be asking for anything out of the ordinary. Over and above everything else, it seems that these young people deserve better. They deserve to be **communicated** to properly, **included** in their care planning, **supported** and **prepared** for their care experience and to **understand** what is happening to them and why. Whilst there are examples of young people in care and care leavers receiving this, it is not consistent enough across the board. Young people in care have a **right** to expect this standard of care – and to live a life which is full of opportunities and positive outcomes.

These are *our* young people – and these are *their* views.

They deserve to be heard.

Appendix 1: Children and Young People Bill – questions for looked after children, young people and care leavers



1. Age.....

2. Gender: (please circle): M F

3. How would you describe your ethnic origin? (please circle)

- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Scottish White | Other UK White | Scottish Black | Other UK Black |
| African Caribbean | Indian | Pakistani | |
| Bangladeshi | Chinese | Other (please specify) | |

4. Where do you live just now? - (please circle)

- Children's unit Foster care Residential school Secure unit At home
Other _____

5. What Local Authority provides your care (to be filled in by the worker)?

6. Which Local Authority area do you currently live in? (to be filled in by the worker)?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

7. In a few sentences, can you think of anything that would have made your life better, *before going into care*.

8. In a few sentences, can you think of anything that would have made your life better *whilst in care*?

9. In a few sentences, can you think of anything that would have made your life better *when you left care*?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

BETTER SERVICE PLANNING

10. What professionals do you work with? (*please circle*)

School Teacher

Social Worker

School Nurse

Educational Psychologist

Care Worker

Home Link Worker

Foster Carer

Careers

Throughcare Worker

Doctor

LAC Nurse

Psychiatric Nurse

College Tutor

Advocate

Programmes Worker

Other (please state) _____

11. Why do you work with them?

.....

.....

.....

12. Which professionals do you like working with the most and why?

.....

.....

CHILDREN'S / CARE PLAN

13. Do you have a Children's / Care Plan? YES NO (please circle)

14. Are you involved in your plan? YES NO (please circle)

15. Do you think there should only be one plan for you that all these professionals can work on?

YES NO (please circle)

16. Do you think young people should have a voice in decisions that affect them?

YES NO **DEPENDS** (please circle)

17. Do you have any other comments you would like to add in relation to Children's / Care Plans and your role in them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

18. Do you think children's and young people's rights are important?

YES NO (please circle)

19. Do you know what types of rights you have?

YES NO **SOME OF THEM** (please circle)

20. If yes, how did you know about these? (please detail)

.....
.....

21. If no, do you think you should have been told about these?

YES NO (please circle)

22. Can you think of any times while you were in care, when your rights have helped you?

YES NO (please circle)

If yes, can you tell us about these? (please detail)

.....
.....
.....
.....

SUPPORT UP TO 25 YEARS OLD

23. Do you think it would help / have helped, to have continued support when you leave care?

YES NO (please circle)

24. Do you think this support should stop when you get to 25 years old?

YES NO **DEPENDS ON THE PERSON'S CIRCUMSTANCES** (please circle)

If no, can you explain why not? (please detail)

.....

.....

.....

25. What type of support do you think would be helpful? (please list)

.....

.....

.....

.....

26. Which of the following services do you think you should get this help / support from?

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Social Worker | School Nurse | College / University staff |
| Educational Psychologist | Care Worker | Home Link Worker |
| Foster Carer | Careers services | Throughcare Worker |
| Doctor | LAC Nurse | Psychiatric Nurse |
| College Tutor | Advocate | Programmes Worker |

FOSTER CARE (if you have experience of foster care)

27. Do/did you feel part of your foster family/families?

YES NO SOME OF THEM (please circle)

Please comment

.....

.....

.....

28. Do you think foster carers should have qualifications?

YES NO (please circle)

Please comment

.....

.....

.....

29. Do you think foster carers should receive a minimum payment to look after you / other children and young people?

YES NO (please circle)

Please comment

.....

.....
.....

30. Do you think there should be a maximum number of children in a foster care placement at the same time?

YES NO (please circle)

31. If yes, what do you think the maximum number of children in a foster care placement should be?

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 (please circle)

Thank you very much for your time and your help.