



Queensland
Foster and
Kinship Care

CARER EXIT SURVEY REPORT

Northern QLD Region

2019-2020

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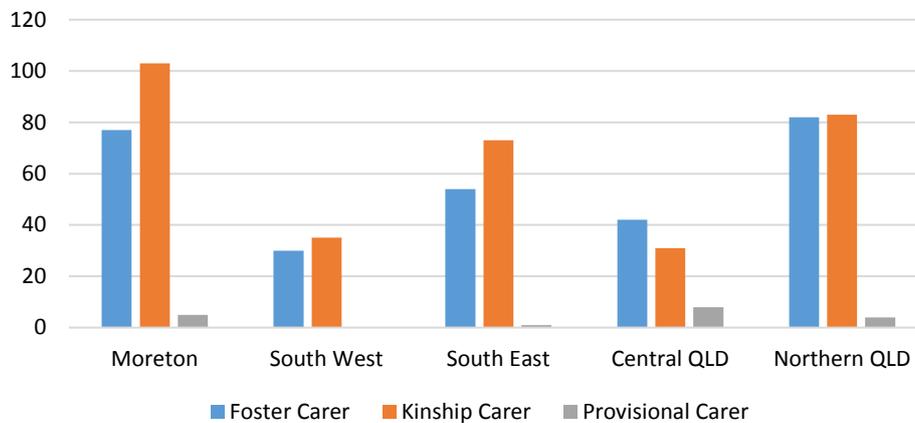
Executive Summary

Information relating to End of Carer Approval Notices

This report brings Queensland Foster and Kinship Care, formerly Foster Care Queensland (hereafter referred to as QFKC) to the end of our twelfth year managing the Exit Interview Program. For this report QFKC has maintained the breakdown of regions.

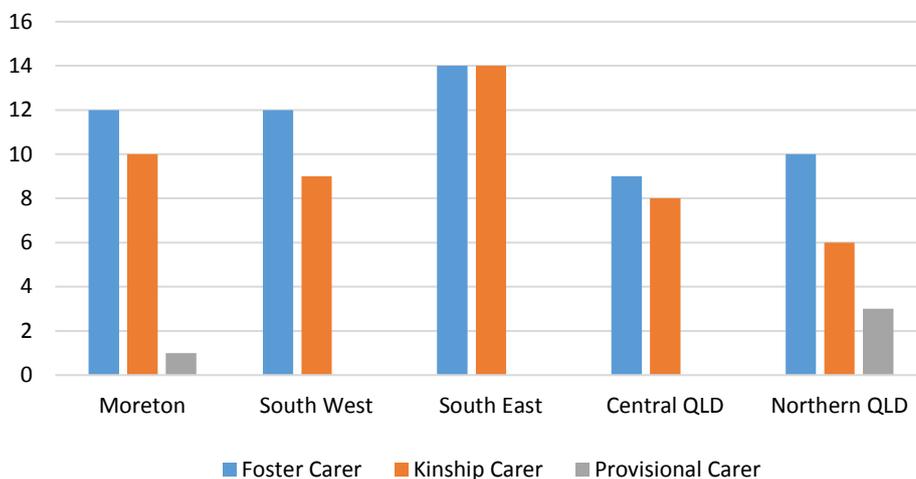
QFKC received a total of 630 Exit Interview referrals for the period **1st July 2019 to 30th June 2020**. 286 of the total were Foster Carers, 326 of the total were Kinship Carers, and 18 were Provisional Carers.

End of Carer Approval Notices received by QFKC during the period of 1st July 2019-30th June 2020



108 Exit Surveys were completed on Survey Monkey, either by the carers directly, QFKC entering the data on behalf of the carer from a paper based survey that the carer had been sent and had returned to QFKC, or the carer requested a telephone interview and QFKC entered the data onto Survey Monkey during the telephone interview. The return rate this year in relation to completed surveys, is 17%.

People who completed the Exit Survey



Of the 108 people who completed the survey, 57 were Foster Carers, 47 were Kinship Carers and 4 were Provisional Carers.

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

- QFKC send a letter when they receive the End of Carer Approval Notice from the Department, informing the person/persons that QFKC has received the End of Carer Approval Notice and would they 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 posted with a return stamp addressed envelope, which upon return would then be entered into Survey Monkey by QFKC.
- After a two week period QFKC would follow up with the past carers via phone, where possible, to acknowledge receipt of the letter and discuss the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences. Where no phone contact details have been provided on the End of Carer Approval Notice, but an email has been, QFKC would follow up by email.

It has been noted over the years that QFKC do not receive all the End of Carer Notices that should be provided to QFKC to give the opportunity to carers 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 QFKC 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. This issue has been addressed in previous years and it would appear that again not all End of Carer Approval Notices have been received by QFKC in the year 2019-2020.

Overall Data and Findings

This report outlines the feedback from all 108 carers and it is sectioned into regions so that the information is specific to the feedback from each region.

Across the state people identified positive aspects of their time as carers and these related to;

- The range of allowances provided by Child Safety to help meet the cost of caring for a child. This was consistent to all five regions as being satisfactory
- Number of children placed with the carer
- Contact with the agency
- The allowance payment rates
- How quickly allowances were paid (this was separate to how quickly out of pocket expenses were reimbursed and a high number of people identified that they were not satisfied)
- Opportunities carers were given to participate in training and professional development
- Pre-service training delivery
- Standard training modules 5,6 and 7
- Ability to access additional training
- Information provided about your role and responsibilities
- Information provided about Foster and Kinship Care Services role and responsibilities

This has been similar to previous years and reflects the overall responses to the question, whilst some responses may differ to being satisfied, we have taken a range of responses whereby the percentage rate is high for satisfaction.

Over the years of compiling the exit report, there are common themes in terms of why a person considers foster care outside of the family connections for kinship care applications, and general foster carers have a desire to help children in need. This desire has always been identified as a response to asking why people decided to become carers.

Another common theme for leaving the role generally does not relate to the child, it generally relates to the lack of support received by the carer for themselves and the children in their care.

Notably this year there has been focus on the carer's ability to make a complaint to Child Safety and this has been consistent throughout all regions.

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, 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 reports.

The majority of responses relating to interactions with Child Safety identified that the carer felt.

- Unsupported
- Did not feel valued
- Lack of communication
- Inability to make a complaint

The majority of responses identifying that the carer left due to issues with the children placed with them stated it was for the following reasons.

- Behavioural
- Complexity of issues (trauma, medical, psychological)

In regard to issues relating to the children it was identified that it was the lack of support that resulted in the carer being unable to manage complex behaviours resulting in the placement ending.

The majority of responses relating to leaving due to family reasons identified the following.

- Time commitments
- Partner and biological children did not want to continue
- Change in circumstances
- Cost of providing care

The findings relating to what were the most challenging aspects of being a carer have remained consistent over the years that QFKC 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.

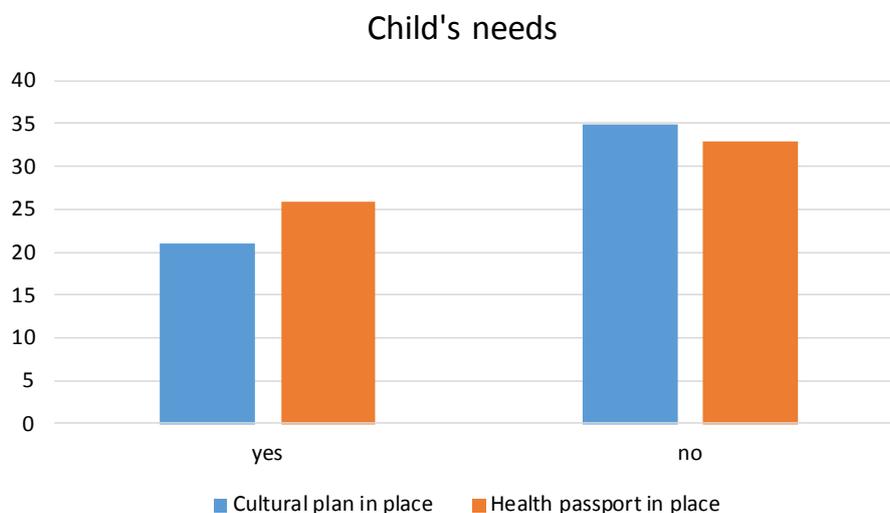
Some areas of care were identified as equally satisfied and dissatisfied in their responses.

- Child Safety's policies and procedures dealing with Harm Report/SOC process
- Handling of a Harm Report/SOC process
- Outcome of discussions with Child Safety
- Discussions with FAST

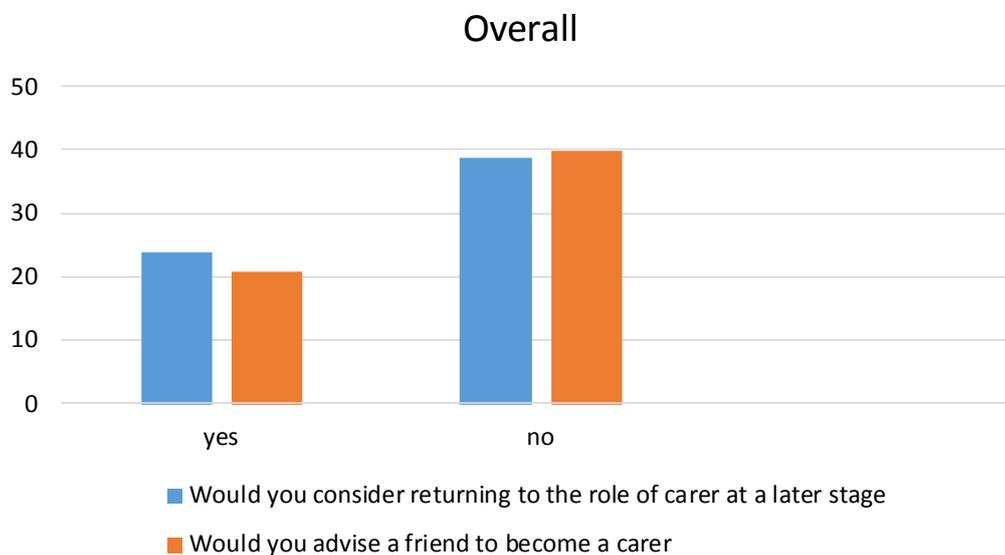
People were asked if they had attended training in the last 12 months, 93 people responded to this question and 33 people stated they had attended but 60 people stated they had not attended training.

People were also asked if they had a Foster Care Agreement in place and 56 people stated they did and 5 people stated they didn't, 25 people stated they were not sure.

In relation to the needs of the child the following information was identified;



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;



In summary, more people identified that they would not consider returning to foster care at a later stage, slightly lower number of people identified that they may consider returning to the role of caring at a later stage. A percentage identified that they would if it were a family member that required their care. In respect to “would you advise a friend to become a carer?” there were sixty-one responses and forty people stated that they would not advise a friend to become a carer.

There are many similarities within previous reports, and elements of the responses do identify a carer's satisfaction within their caring role for example training and development, and sections of financial support, but we keep seeing the same issue standing out within the responses, support and communication.

It would also appear that carers are remaining in their caring role for shorter periods of time than years gone by. Generally, this would be between one to three years for the majority of the respondents to the survey. This short timeframe did not relate to a carer having long term guardianship of the child, it was in relation to leaving the role. In terms of the responses from 57 foster carers and 47 kinship carers, there would be a percentage that their carer status ended due to the child returning home and the former carer no longer being a kinship carer, but there is a significant amount of general foster carers that have made the decision to exit the system after a short period of time. The sustainability of carers will only ensure that children can remain in placements for as long as they need to without having to move due to the carer leaving after a short period of time.

There is another extract that I would like to share with you from a comment made by a carer in relation to how we can assist carers, this was their response.

“Honesty and openness and listening to the carers”

Report presented on behalf of QFKC by:

Hazel Little
President

Bryan Smith
Executive Director

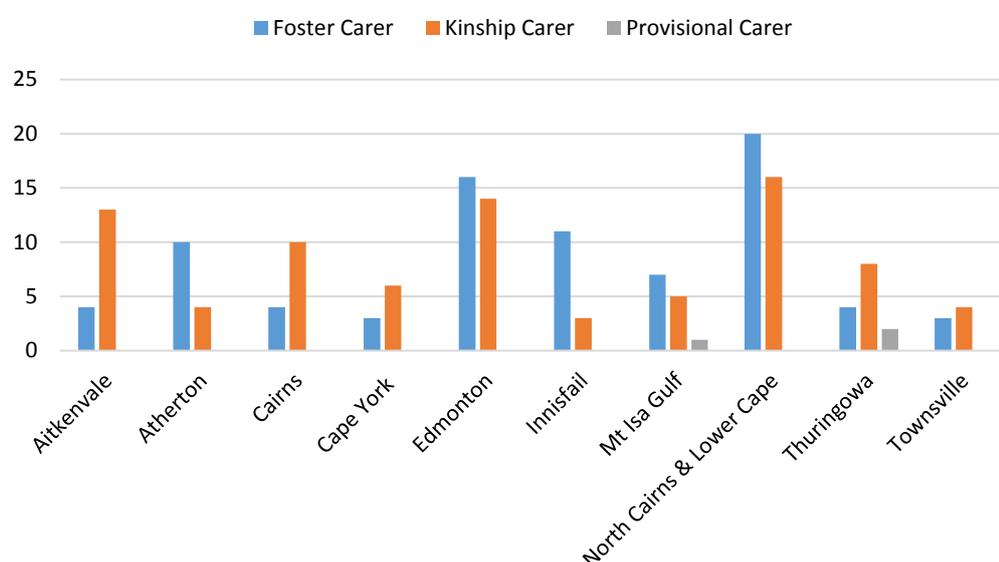
26 August 2020

Summary – Northern QLD Region

Information taken from the End of Carer Approvals

Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (here after referred to as QFKC) received 630 End of Carer Approval Notices during the period of 1st July 2019-30 June 2020. 169 (26.8%) of the end of carer approval notices were received from the Northern QLD Region and affiliated with the following service centres. Please note that sometimes all the required information is not provided to QFKC.

End of Carer Approval Notices

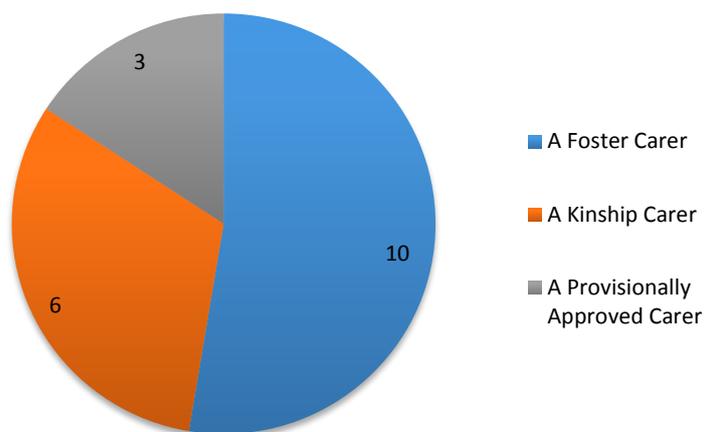
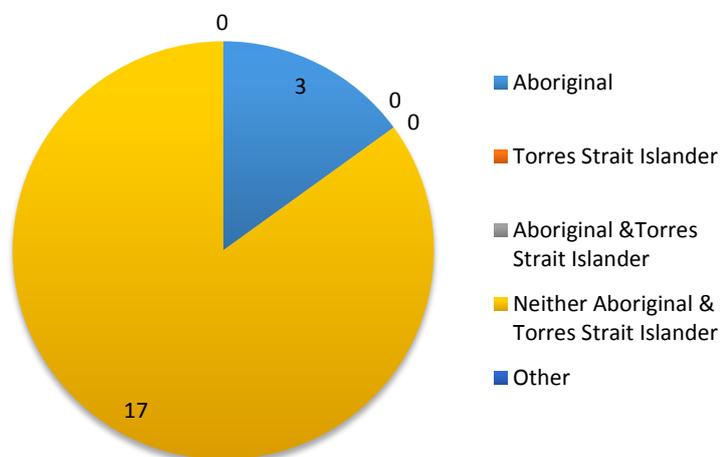


About You

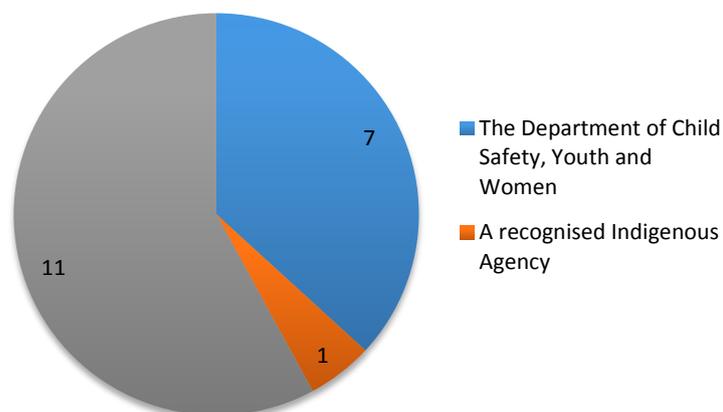
All 169 end of carer approvals were sent an acknowledgment letter from QFKC asking them if they wanted to complete an exit survey. There were 20 people who completed the survey, affiliated with the service centres below.

- Aitkenvale 0
- Atherton 1
- Cairns 5
- Cape York 2
- Cooktown 1
- Edmonton 4
- Innisfail 1
- Mt Isa Gulf 0
- North Cairns & Lower Cape 1
- Thuringowa 2
- Thursday Island 0
- Townsville 2
- Weipa 1

From the 20 people who completed the survey for the Northern Region the following information was shared;

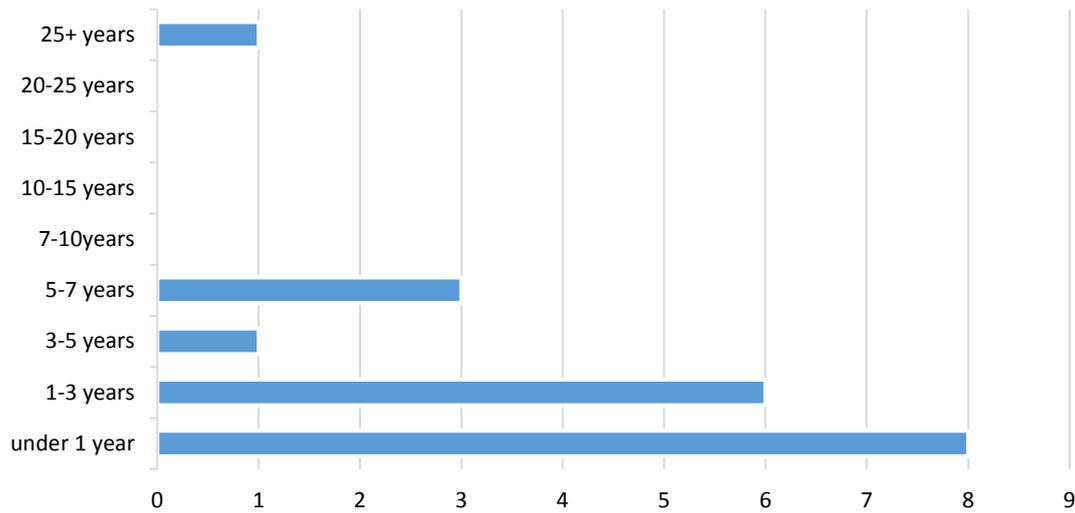


People were asked to identify who they are supported by, they answered as follows;



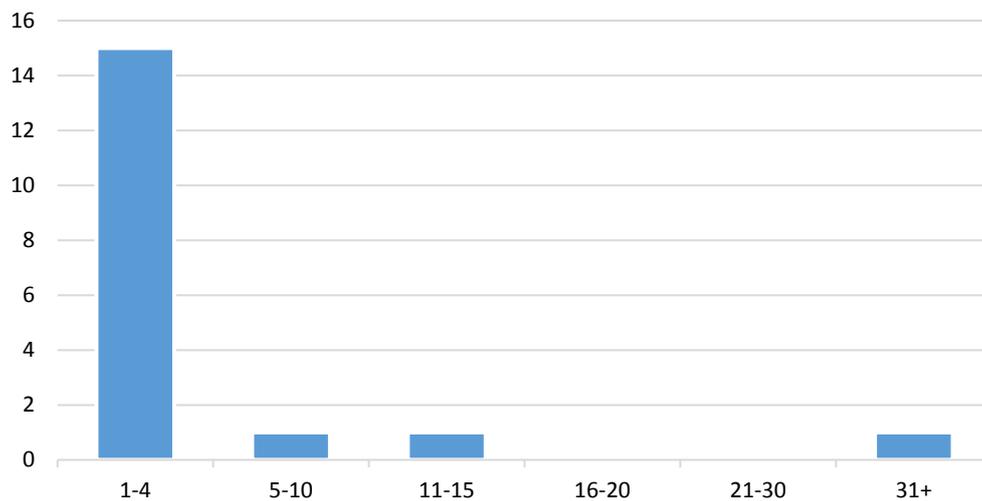
Information is requested regarding the person's time spent as a carer; to identify when they started as a Carer and when they stopped. Below is a graph that identifies the length of time stated in the responses.

Number of years people have been carers



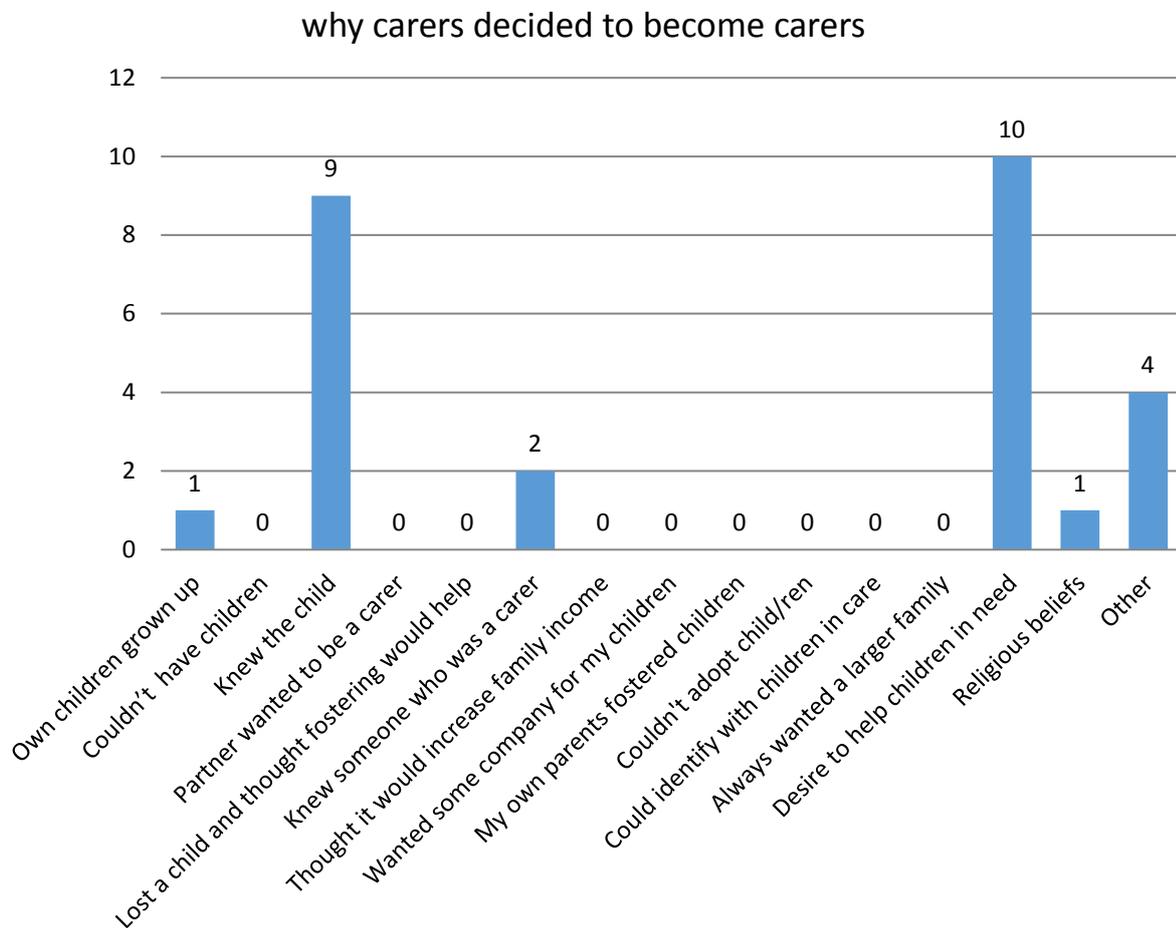
The information provided also evidences the amount of children the person/persons have provided care to.

Number of children



About You as a Carer

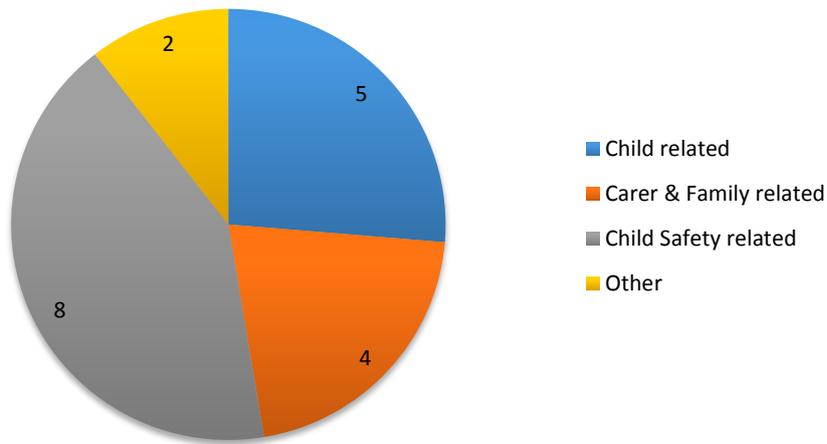
People were asked to identify what made them decide to become a Foster Carer.



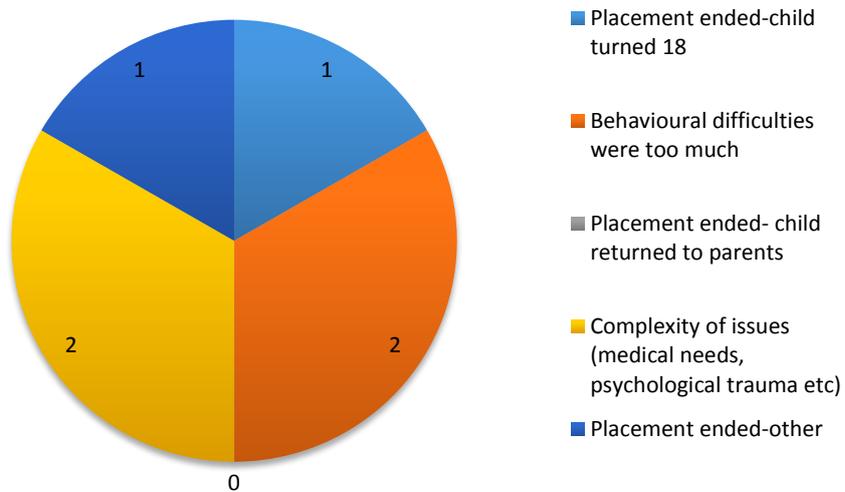
Reason for Discontinuing as a Foster/Kinship Carer

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

Main reason for deciding to stop being a carer

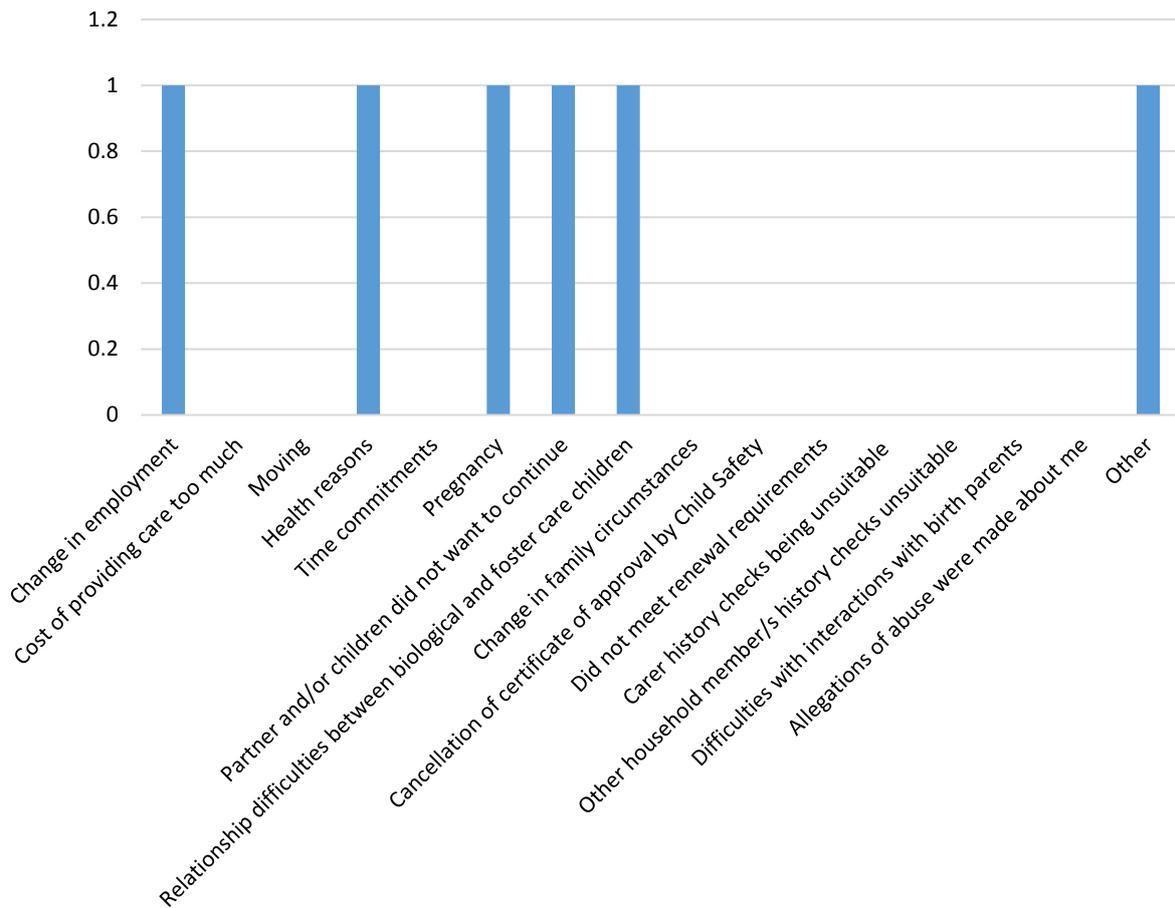


The following information will be specific to the reason that has been provided in this question. If the respondents answered that they ceased being carers due to child related reasons, they are asked to expand on the reasons, as follows.

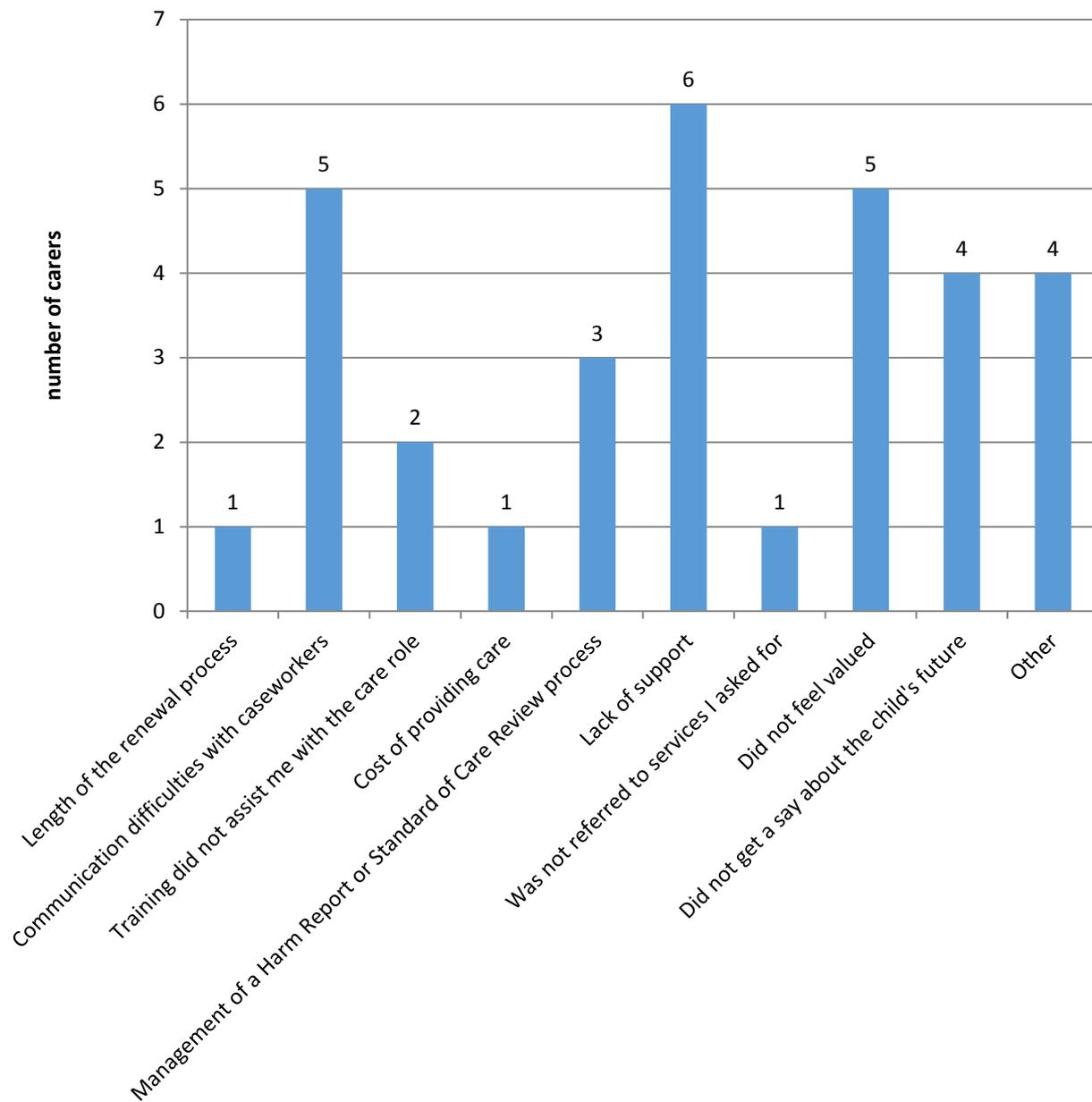


For people who stated that they ceased caring due to carer and family reasons, they were asked to expand on their response.

Ceased being a carer for carer and family related reasons

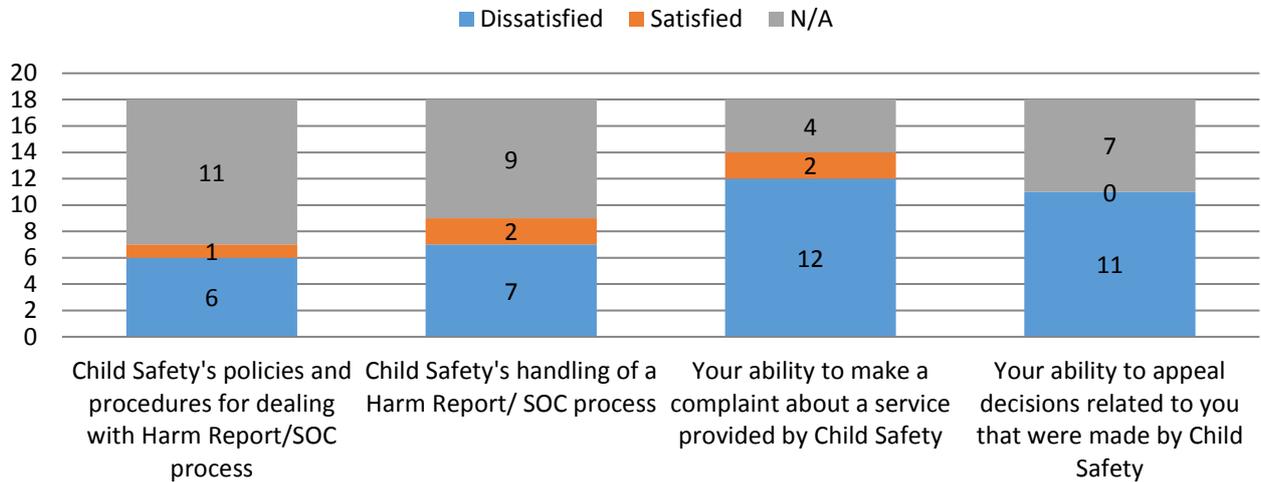


Response from carer when ceasing care due to issues relating to Child Safety Services



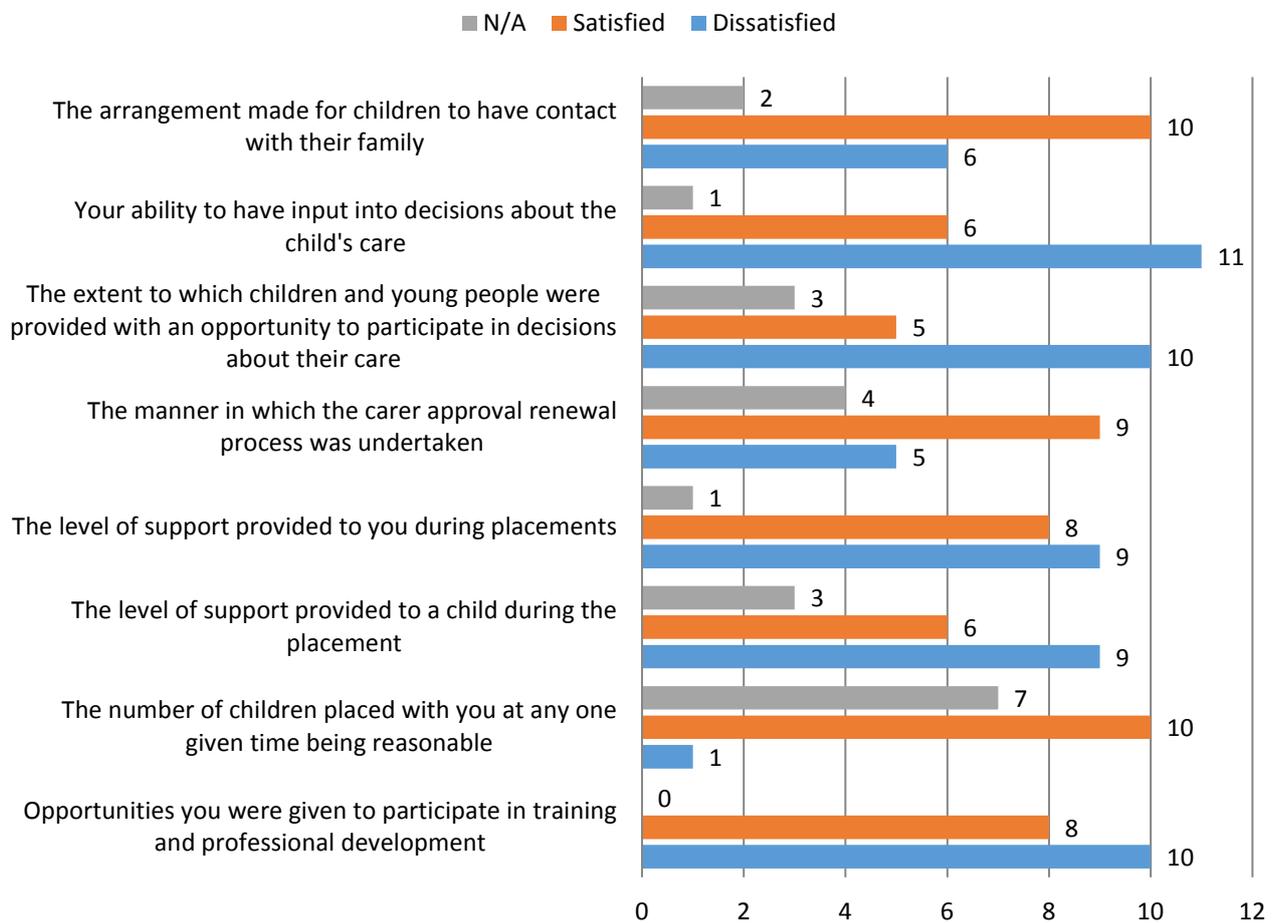
People undertaking the surveys were asked how satisfied they were with different elements of their involvement with the Department of Child Safety.

In regards to Child Safety, how satisfied were you with



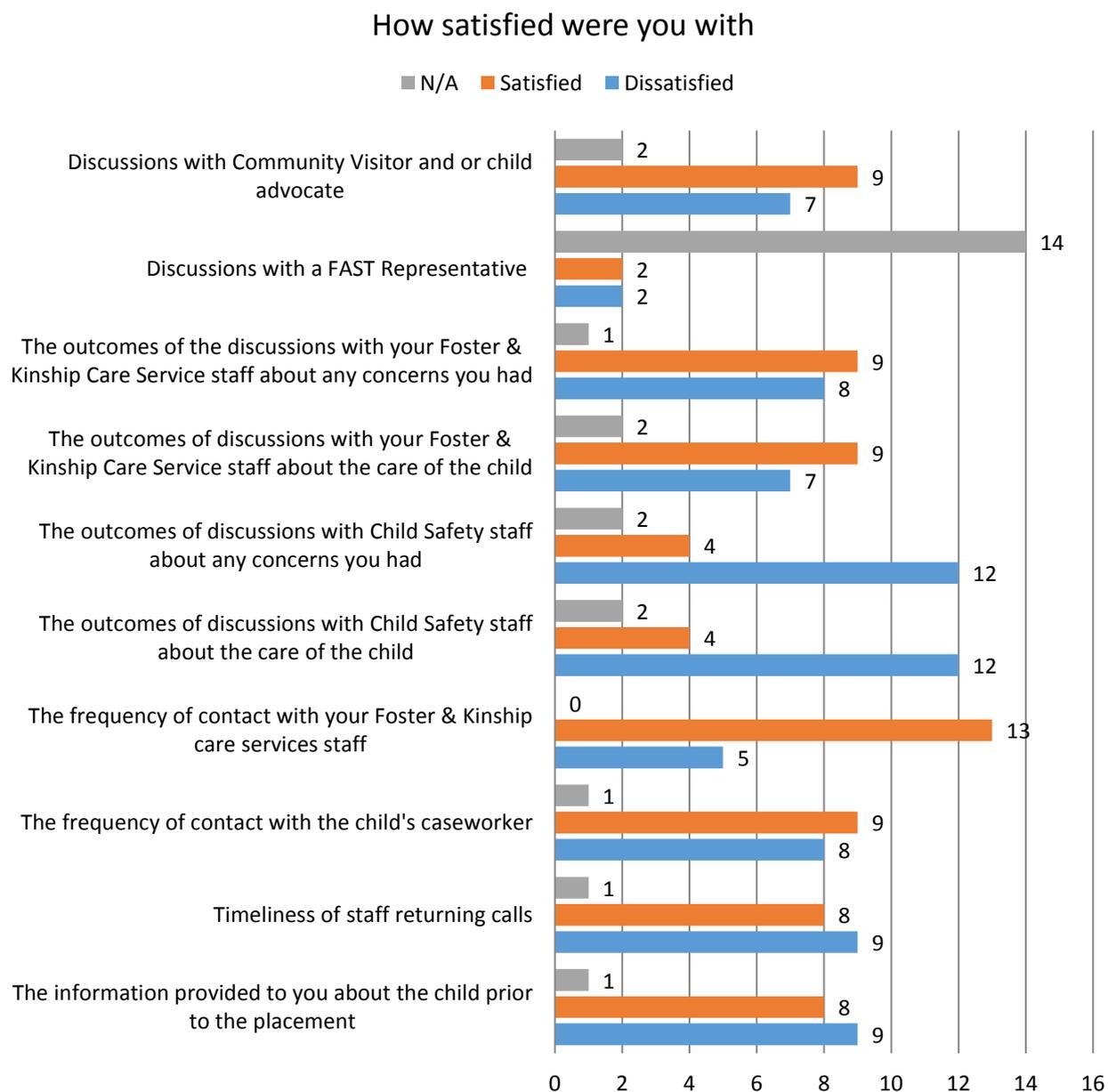
The Experience of Caring

How satisfied were you with



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.

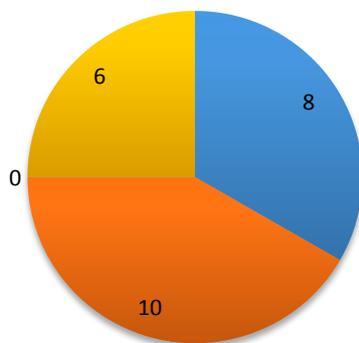


The carers were asked to identify whether Child Safety discussed the following matters with them:

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

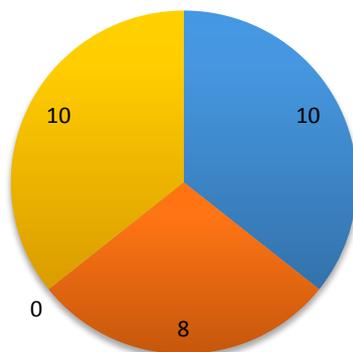
The child's cultural support needs

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, was there a cultural support plan in place



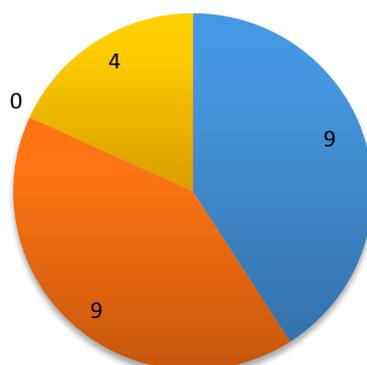
The child's educational needs

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, was there an education support plan in place



The child's health needs

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, did the child have a current child health passport



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

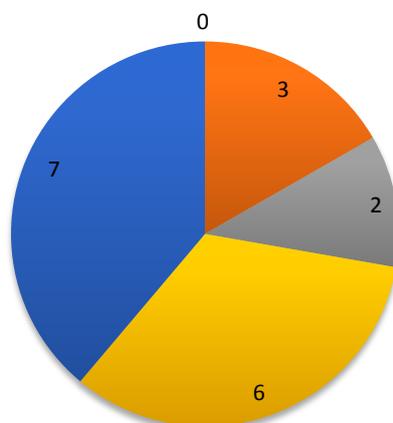
Did you receive information about FAST and/or QLD Foster and Kinship Care



The Experience of Caring: Contact

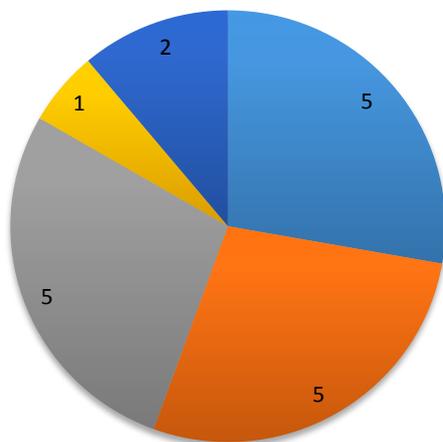
How often did you have contact with Child Safety staff

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Fortnightly ■ Monthly ■ Only occasionally



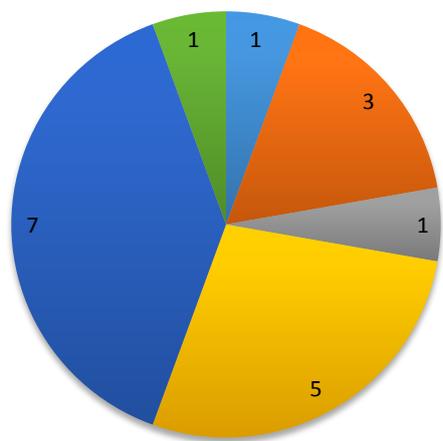
How did contact occur?

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

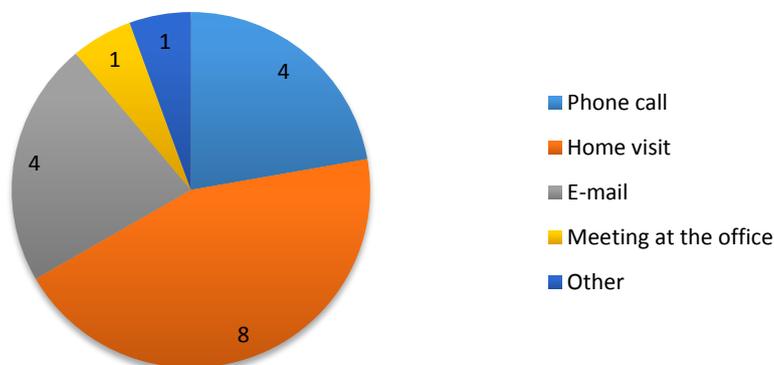


How often did you have contact with your Foster and Kinship Care Service?

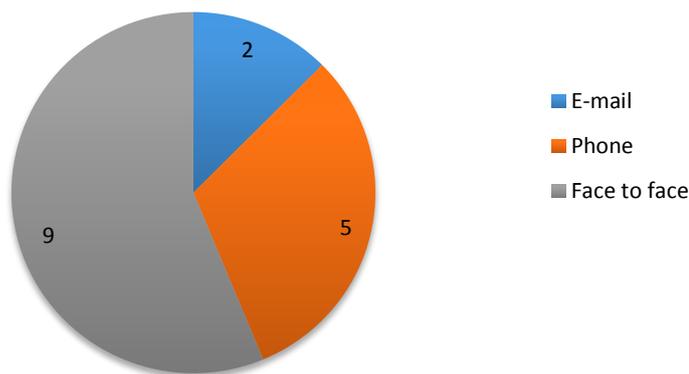
■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Fortnightly ■ Monthly ■ Only occasionally ■ Not applicable



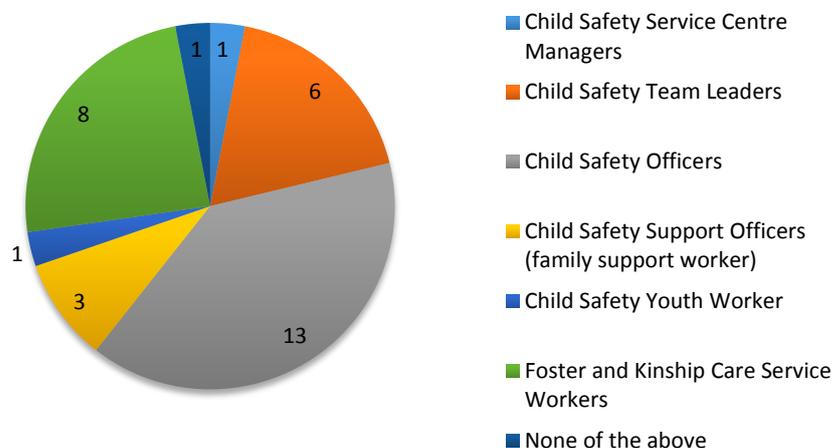
How did this contact occur?



What was your preference regarding contact?

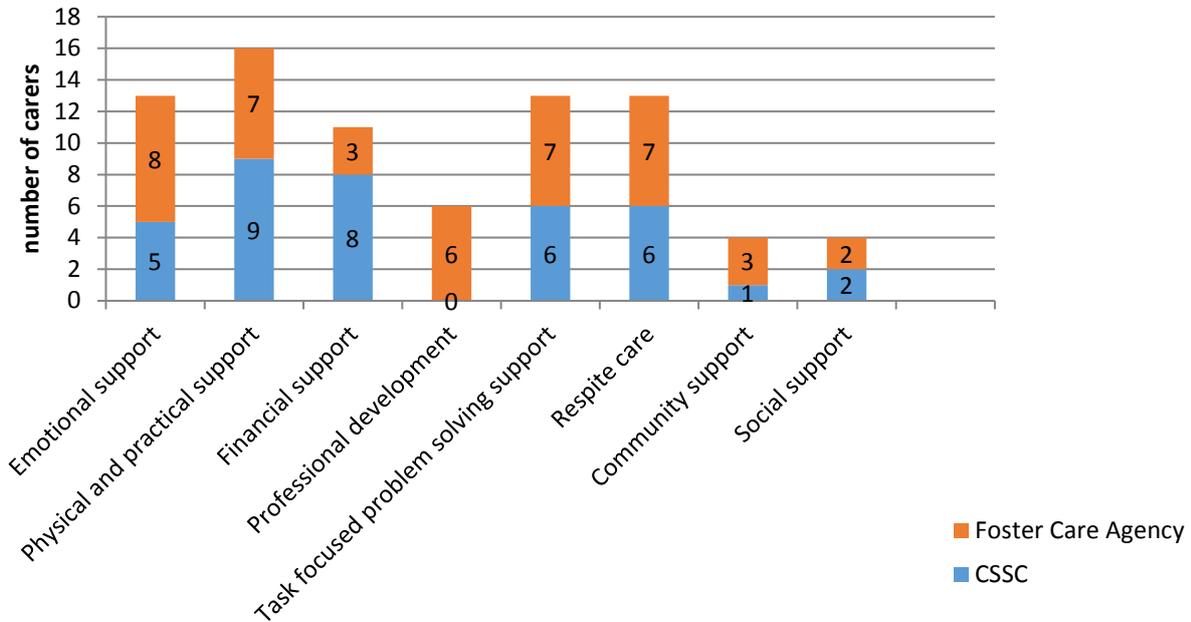


Which of the following persons did you usually have contact with?

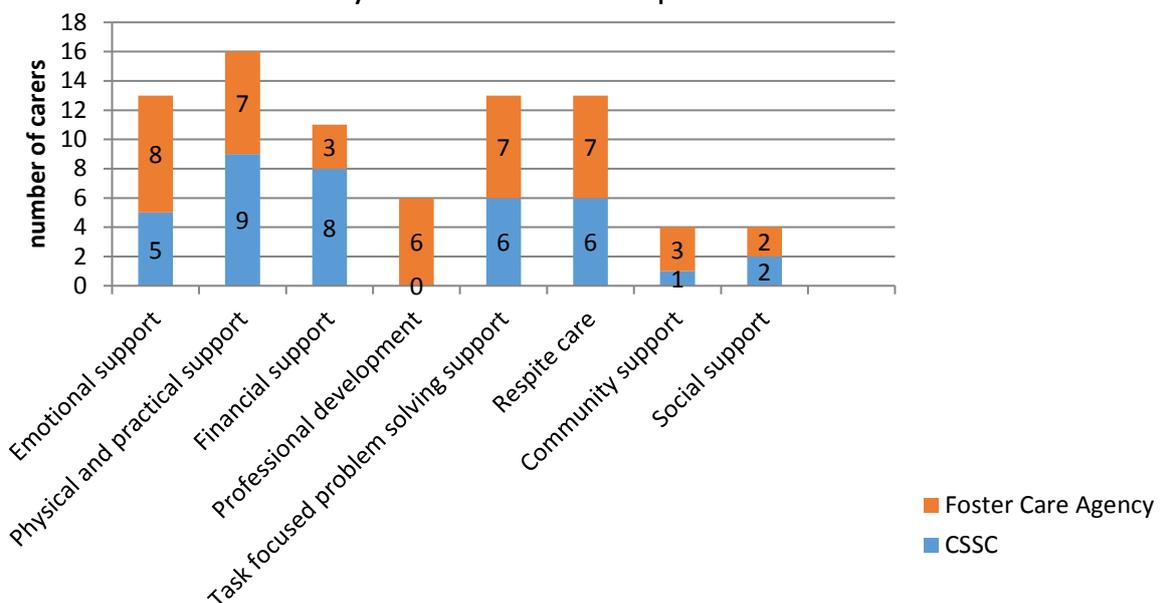


The Experience of Caring: Support

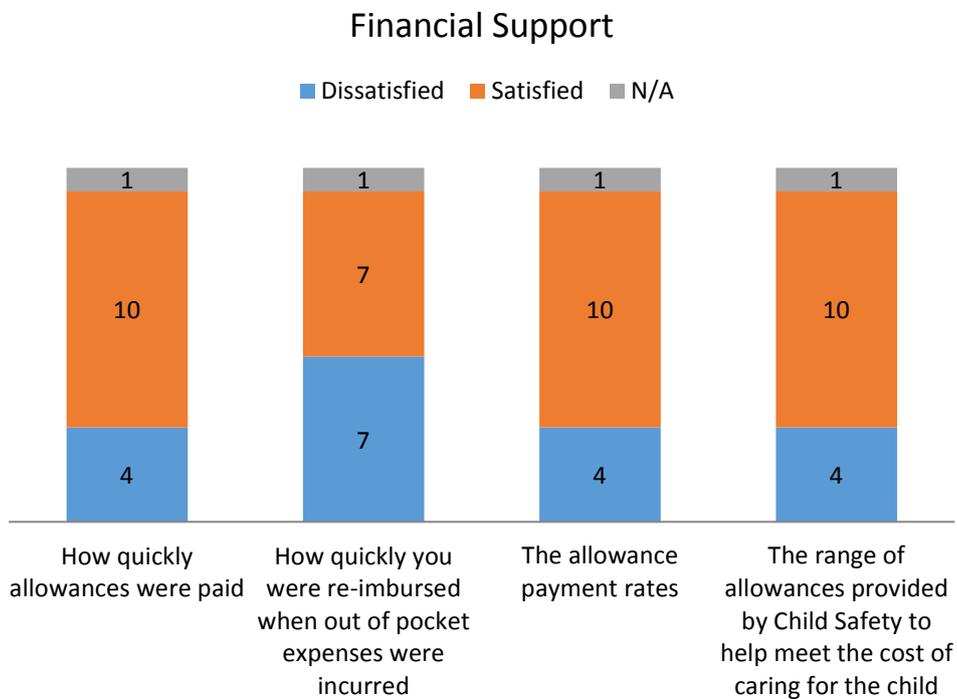
Please indicate whether during your time as a foster carer you requested any of the following supports from Child Safety and/or your Foster & Kinship Care Service



Please indicate whether during your time as a foster carer you received any of the following supports from Child Safety and or your Foster & Kinship Care Service

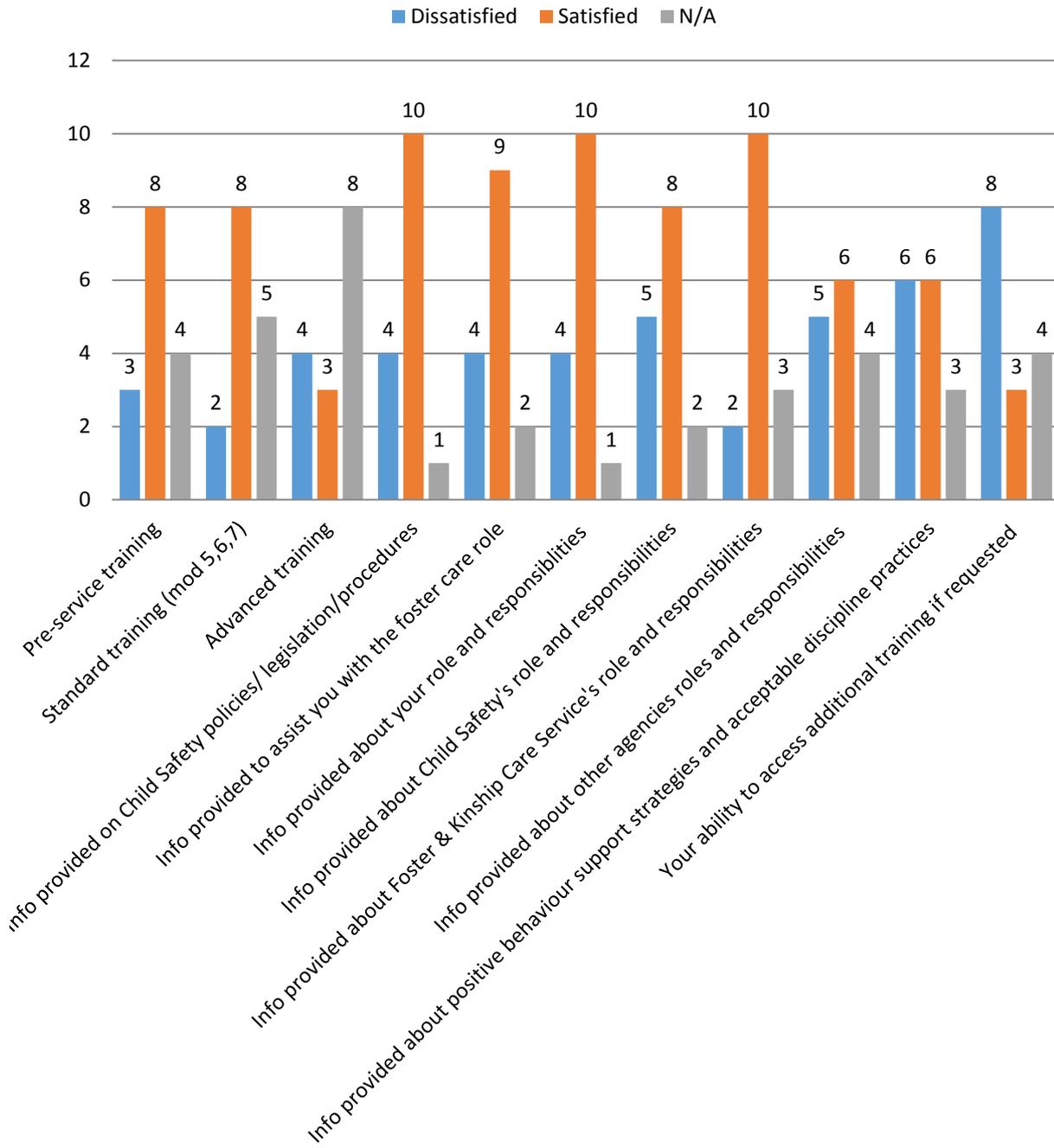


The Experience of Caring: Financial Support

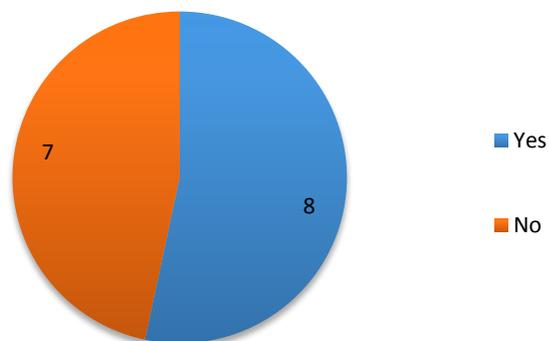


The Experience of Caring: Training and Professional Development

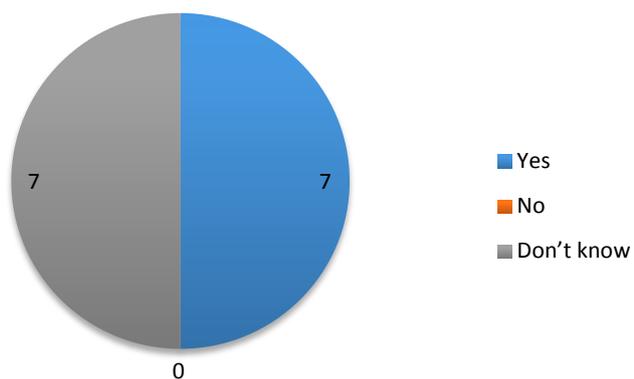
In regard to training and development, how satisfied were you with the following?



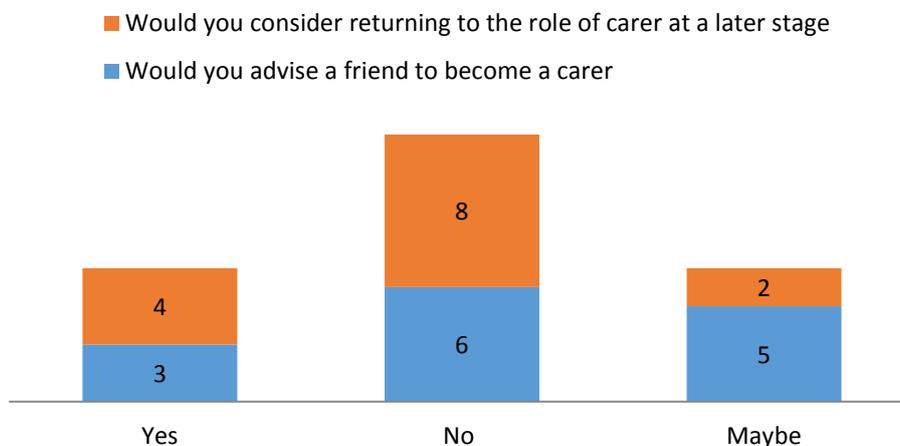
Have you attended any training in the last 12 months



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



Overall Experience



The QFKC Carer Exit Survey Report seeks to understand carers' experiences through a survey format that includes both data related feedback and comments from exiting carers. The data related feedback helps to develop a clear visual picture from the exiting carer community and the comments provide exiting carers with an opportunity to expand on the data informed feedback by way of providing personal caring experiences.

QFKC collate two forms of the regional Carer Exit Survey Report. One is unfiltered and provides the data alongside all comments made by exiting carers and the second one provides data only. The unfiltered report is provided to Child Safety so they can gain better insight into why carers are leaving the system, and many of the comments provide identifying and detailed information from exiting carers which is not intended for public viewing. QFKC respects the right for exiting carers to have their views heard whilst having their privacy and that of the children and families they refer to respected. This filtered version is made available for public viewing and comprises of data only and general summary paragraphs that capture the overall feedback.

QFKC would like to thank every exiting carer who has contributed by way of completing the Exit Survey; these reports provide invaluable insight into the system and help the system to continue to reflect on what is working well and where our challenges lie.