

FOSTER & KINSHIP CARERS SURVEY 2020 REPORT

**South West
Region**






**Queensland
Foster and
Kinship Care**

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Queensland Foster and Kinship Care Inc.

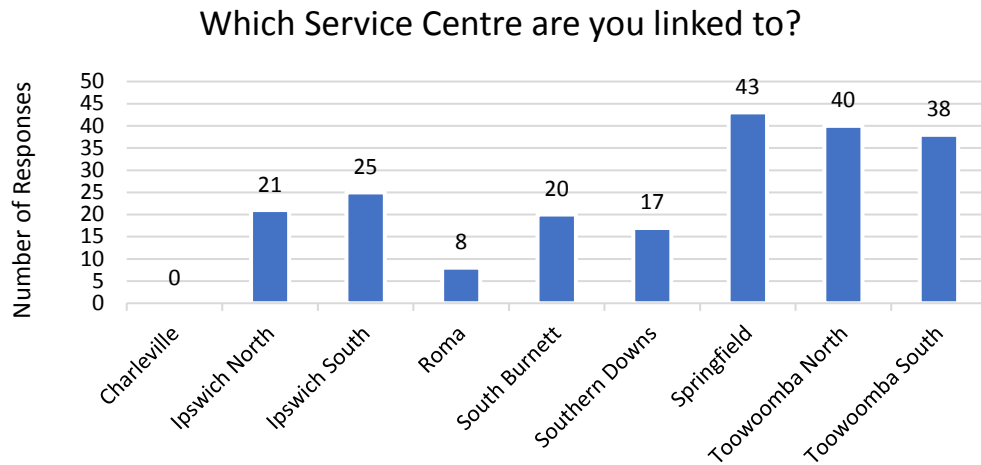
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About the Carer

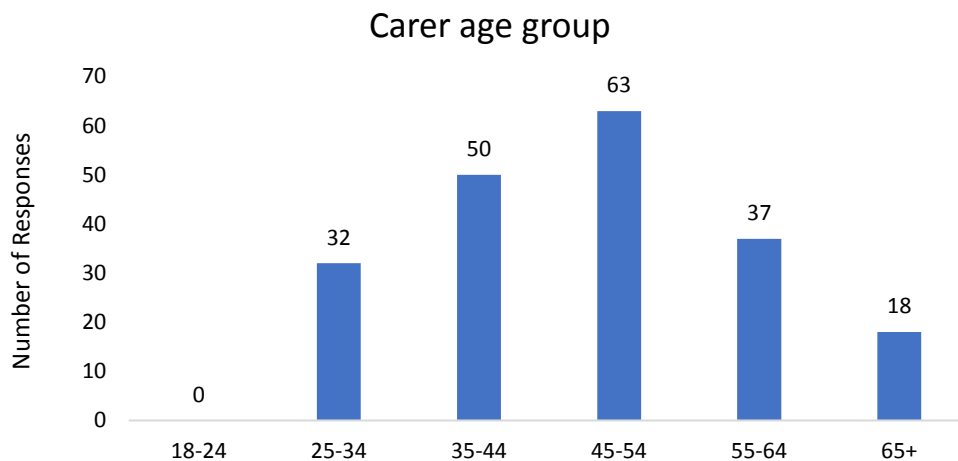
In South West region 212 foster and kinship carers completed the 2020 Carer Survey and were represented in the following Child Safety Service Centres, noting almost all CSSC were represented in the survey.



Of the 212 responses in South West region, 138 identified as foster carers (69%), 59 identified as kinship carers (29.5%) and 3 identified as provisionally approved carers (1.5%).

Carers were asked if they were supported by a fostering and kinship carer agency and 94% of carers who completed the survey stated they were.

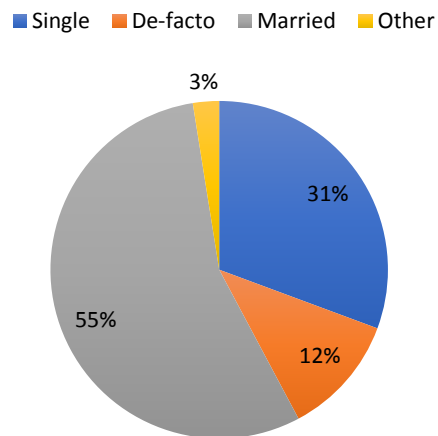
Carers were asked to identify the age group they fitted into.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

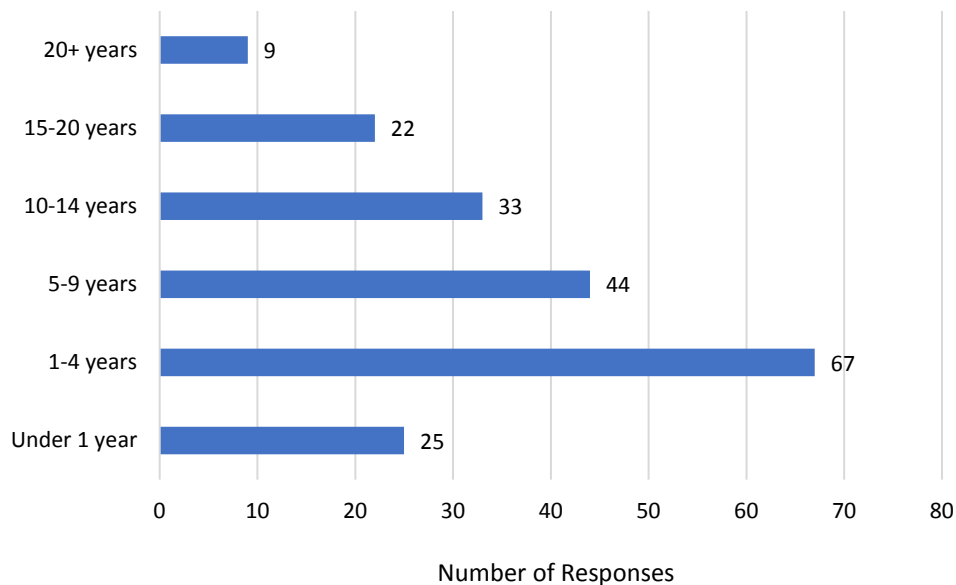
24 carers in South West who completed the survey identified as Aboriginal, 2 carers identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and no carers identified as Torres Strait Islander.

Relationship Status



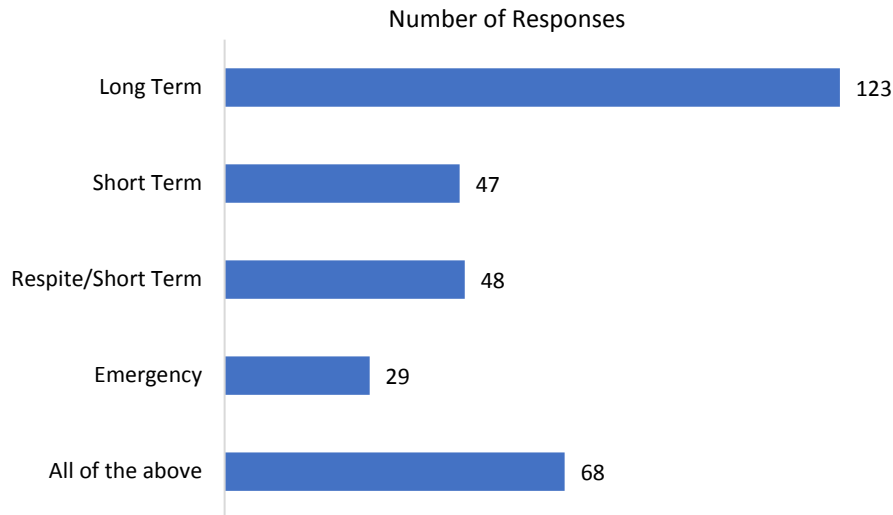
Carers were asked how many years they had been providing care for.

How long have you been a carer?



Carers were asked which type of care they provide, please note that carers were able to select more than one type of care.

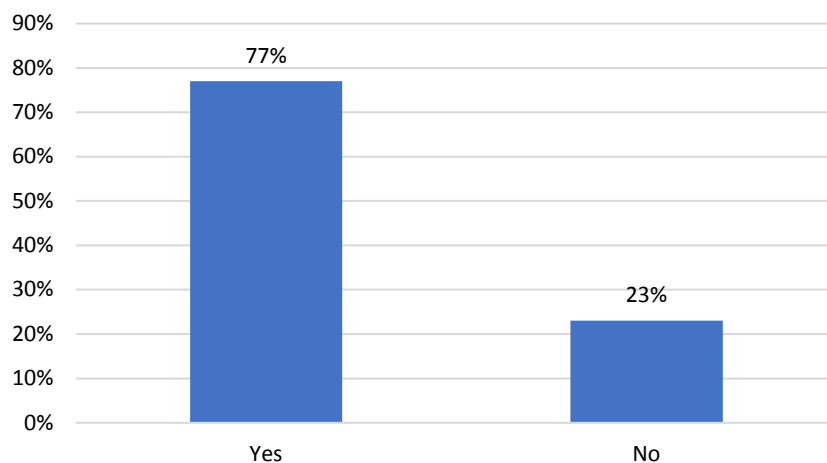
What type of care do you generally provide?



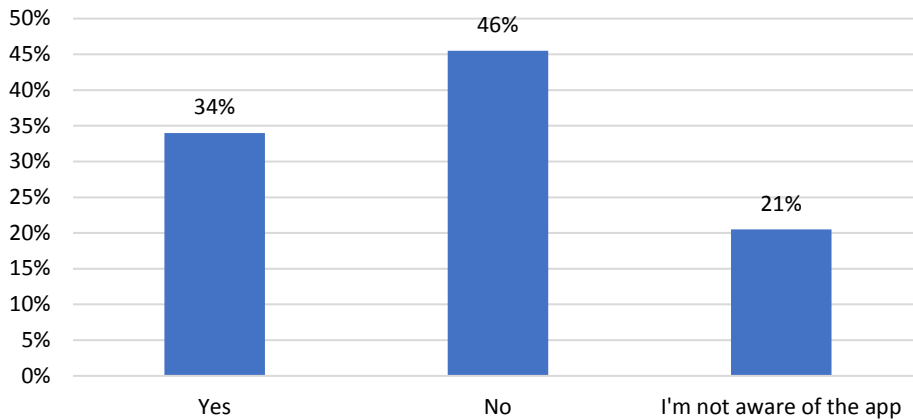
Carer Connect & Statement of Commitment

Carers were asked about their familiarity with the Carer Connect App and the Statement of Commitment. The following responses were provided.

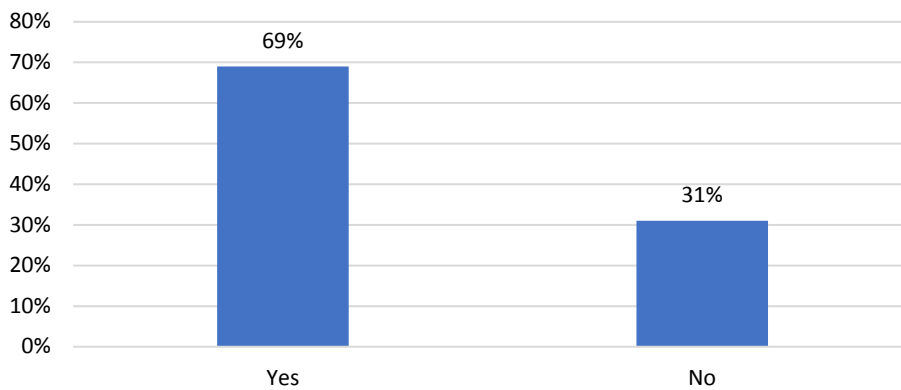
Are you aware of the Carer Connect App



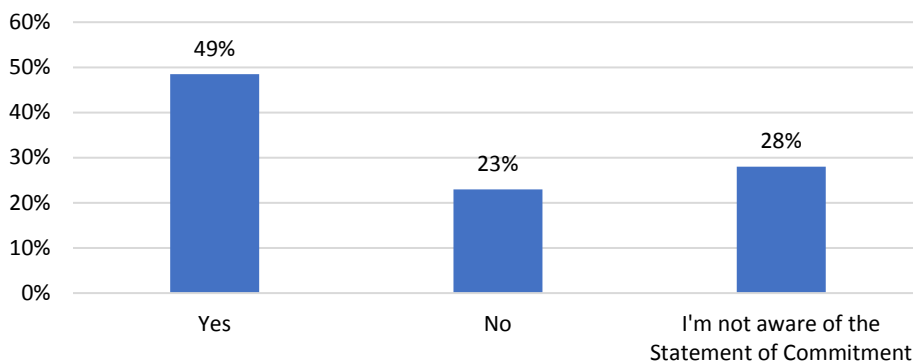
If you are aware of the Carer Connect App, do you use it?



Are you aware of the Statement of Commitment?

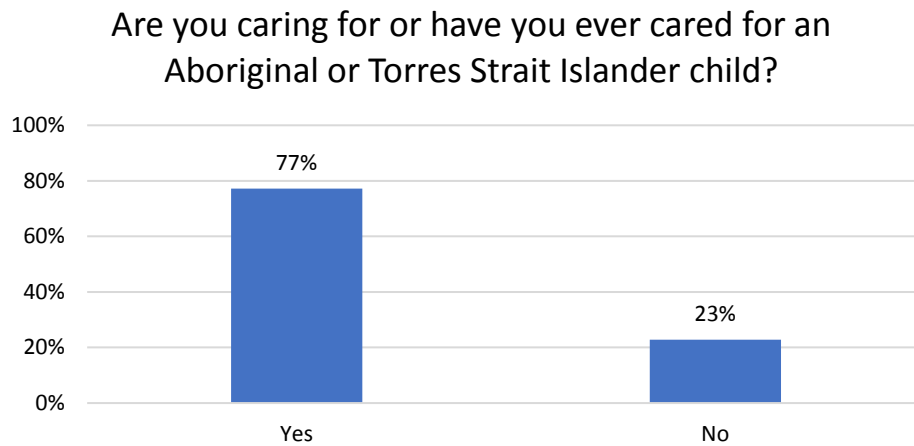


If you are aware of the Statement of Commitment, have you found it a useful document in your role as a carer?



Cultural Diversity

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as follows.

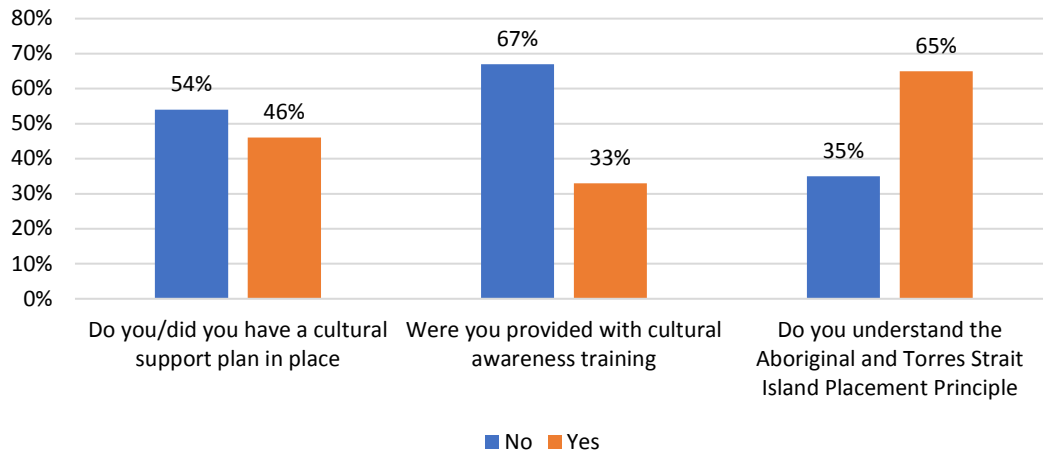


Given that only 26 carers identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in this survey, the majority of those carers who have responded yes to this question would not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Carers who answered yes to the above question, were asked if they had a Cultural Support Plan in place, 46% answered yes, leaving 54% of children placed in care where they identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander either without a Cultural Support Plan or where the carer had no knowledge of its existence.

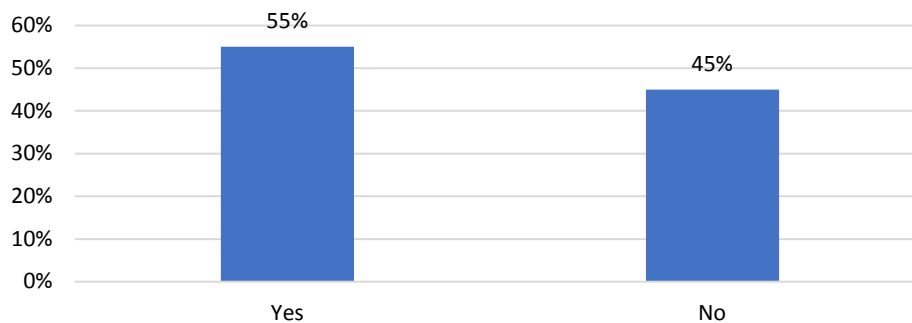
Carers were also asked if they were provided with cultural awareness training to assist them to care for a child who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and as evidenced below 67% of carers who responded advised they did not receive any training to assist them in building their cultural knowledge in their care of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island children.

If you have provided care to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child please answer the following.



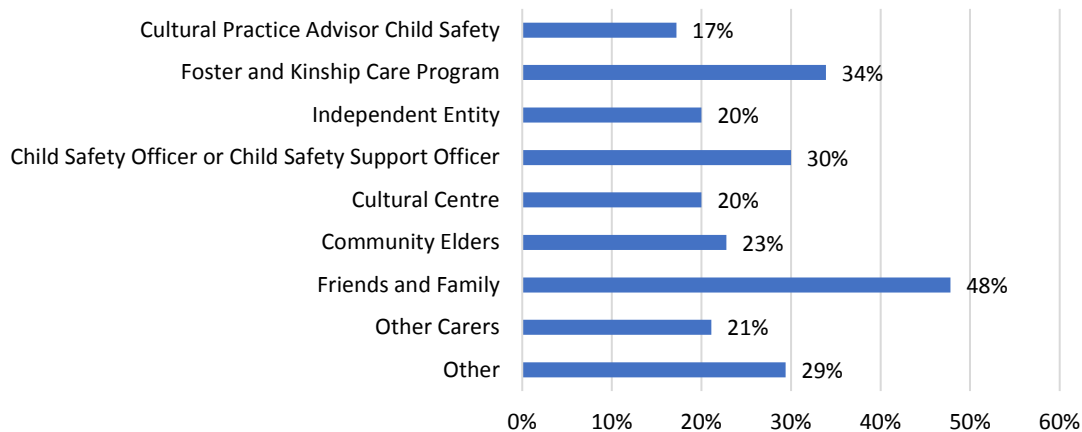
Carers were asked whether they understood the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principle. This principle is explored with foster carers in the Quality Pre-Service Training; however, it must be noted that carers are inundated with information during this training and if this is not followed up with further education and information, it is likely it won't be retained by carers. The majority of carers reported understanding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principle with 65% confirming their understanding and 35% identifying not understanding the principle. 55% also advised they were aware of additional principles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children contained in the Child Protection Act 1999 (Section 5C) that were introduced into legislation in 2018.

Are you aware of additional principles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children contained in the Child Protection Act 1999 section 5C?



Carers were then asked where they accessed their cultural information from. Please note that carers were able to select multiple boxes as sources of information for this section.

As carers where do you access your cultural information from?



Carers have provided many comments which support their genuine desire for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be connected to their culture. Of concern is comments made by carers where their efforts to have the care team support them have not been met. There is also ongoing concern regarding comments where carers have stated that due to the young age of the children they care for, meeting cultural needs is not applicable. This demonstrates a lack of understanding of culture being part of a child’s overall wellbeing and that it must be integrated into day to day life regardless of age.

There were also comments made by Aboriginal carers in this section whereby the cultural needs of the children they are caring for are being met by the very nature of the placement as per the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principle.

CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) Community

This is the third survey QFKC has sought to gather information from our carer community regarding the CALD community, specifically how many of our carers identify as being from a CALD community and whether carers have provided care for children and young people from a CALD community.

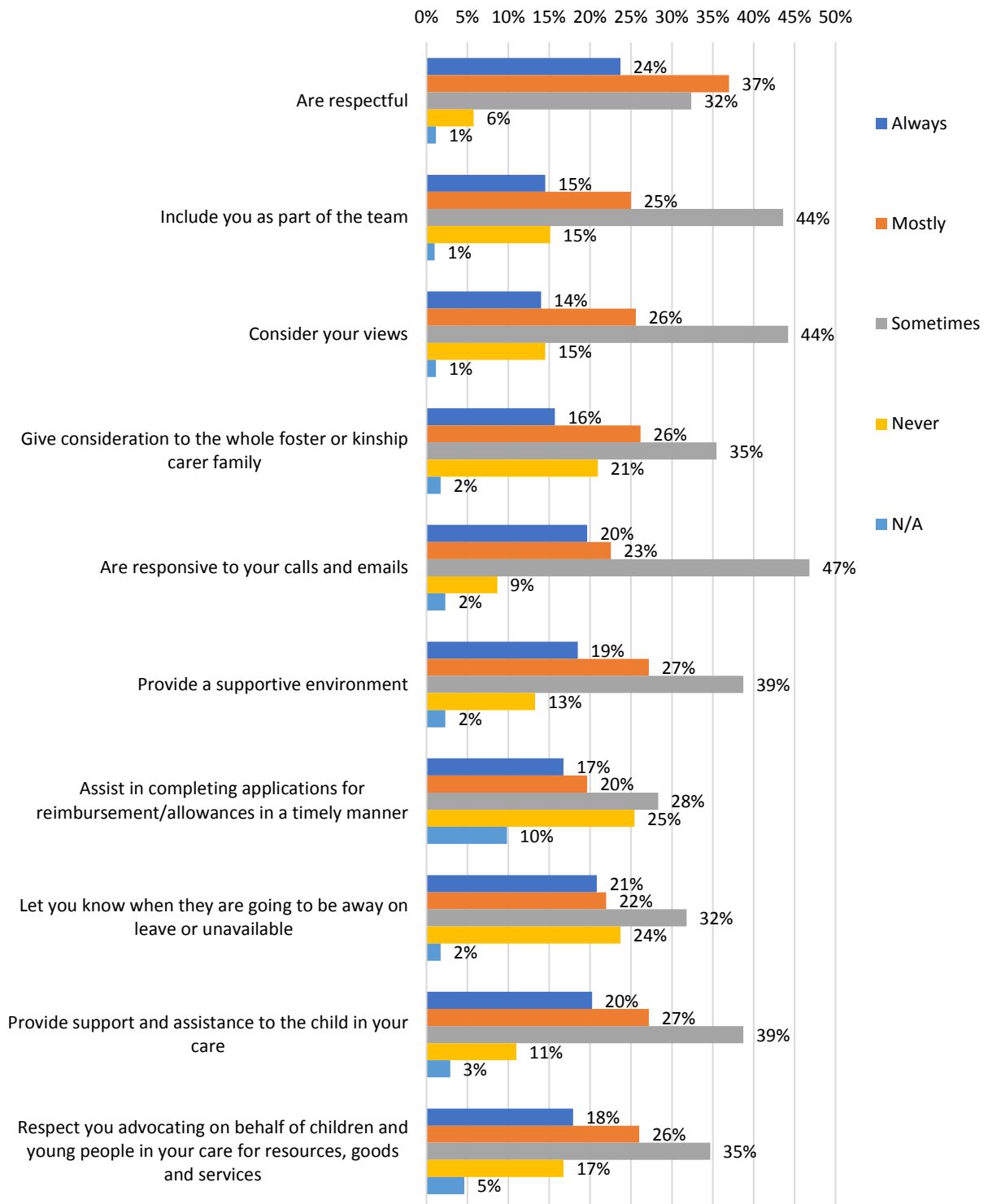
Just 6% (11) of carers who completed the survey in the South West Region identified from a CALD community and 9% (17) of carers in South West who completed the survey reported they either were or had provided care to children who were from the CALD community.

Carers who had provided care to children from a CALD community were asked whether they were provided with appropriate training to assist them to provide culturally appropriate care. Unfortunately only 6% advised that they had been provided with training.

Child Safety Services

Carers were asked a number of questions relating to their satisfaction with Child Safety Services.

How satisfied are you with relationships with staff at Child Safety Services. Are you satisfied that staff at your local office...



A total of 61% of carers reported feeling **respected** either always or mostly which is positive; that does leave 38% of carers however who reported only feeling respected sometimes or never (1% reported this as being N/A).

A total of 40% of carers reported feeling **like part of a team** either always or mostly which is a decrease since the 2018 survey (66%); that leaves the majority of carers who completed the survey in the South West region **not feeling like part of a team** (1% reported this as being N/A).

A total of 40% of carers reported feeling that Child Safety **consider their views** either always or mostly, again a decrease since the 2018 survey (44%); that leaves the majority of carers who completed the survey in the South West region **feeling their views are not considered** (59%) (1% reported this as being N/A).

21% of carers reported that they felt there is only **sometimes consideration given to the whole foster or kinship carer family**. Noticeably this is a decrease on the 2018 survey (which was 35%) however the recent responses from carers reporting that they feel Child Safety never consider the whole foster or kinship carer family is up from 29% in 2018 to 35% in 2020.

43% of carers reported that their CSSC was **responsive to calls and emails**, 55% reported only sometimes or never and 2% marked N/A. With respect to carers feeling that Child Safety **provides a supportive environment** 52% of carers completing the survey in South West feel that this is only sometimes or even never the case.

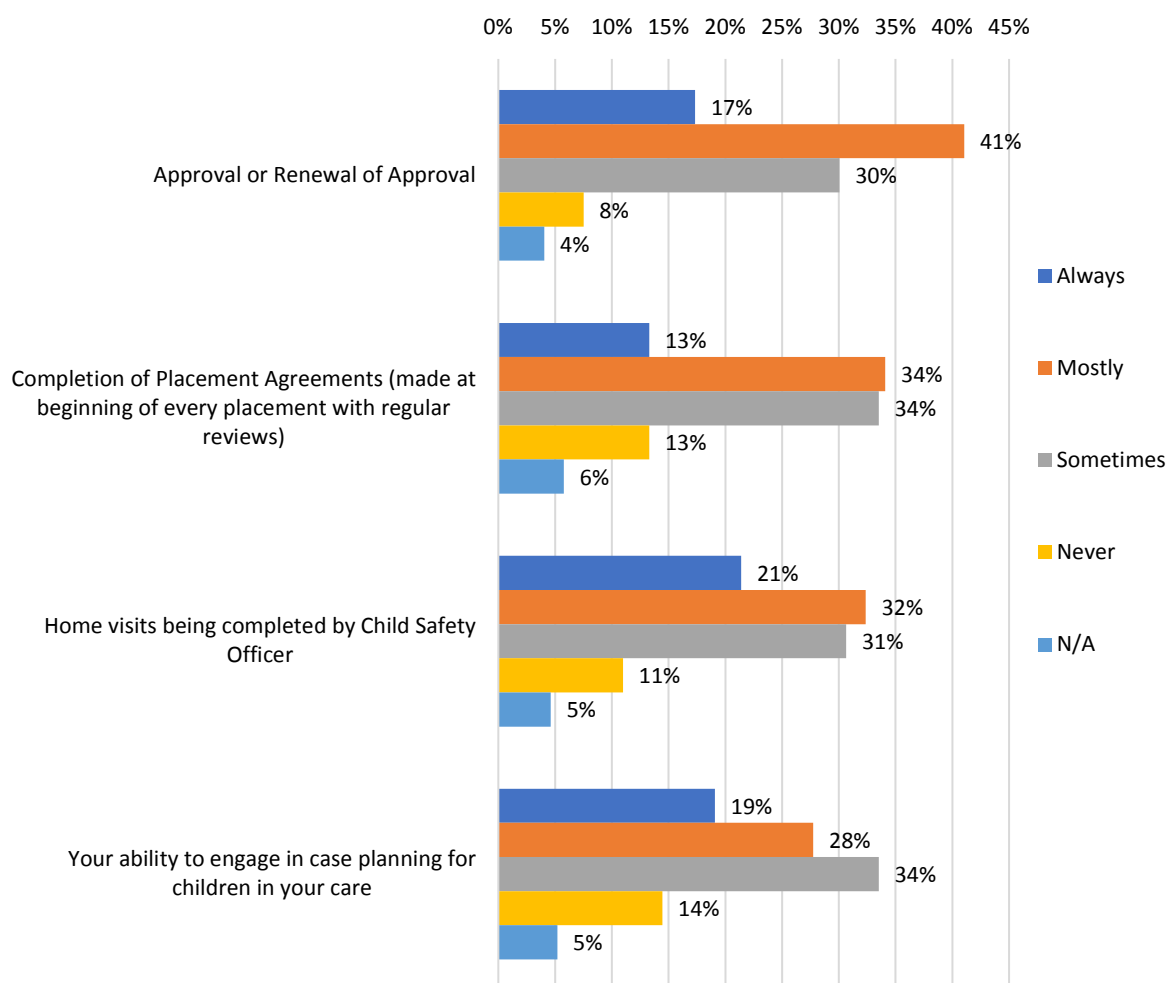
53% of carers completing the survey in the South West region reported either sometimes or never feeling that their CSSC **assisted in completing applications for reimbursement/allowances in a timely manner**. This is down from the 2018 Carer Survey (69%). As stated in previous surveys, financial stress can very much impact on placement stability and is often overlooked as a stress factor in foster and kinship families despite financial stress being one of the most recognised sources of stress in normal everyday families.

Advising the care team when planned leave or unavailability is occurring is a basic communication requirement in order to build a respectful and supportive care team. Carers are expected to **let the care team know when they are going away or are going to be unavailable**, therefore it would be an expectation that this same courtesy is provided to carers. Pleasingly 43% of carers reported always or mostly being advised, up from 29% in the 2018 Carer Survey, however this still leaves more than half of carers who completed the survey in South West left in the dark during these times.

50% of carers reported that they **only sometimes or never are provided support and assistance to the child in their care**. 53% of carers reported that they only sometimes or never feel **respect to advocate on behalf of children and young people in their carer, for resources, goods and service**. Carers are assessed against their ability to be considered a suitable person to provide care through many criteria, one of these being their ability to appropriately advocate on behalf of children. Stakeholders can hold different views, however it is important that all members of a child's safety and support network feel empowered to advocate on behalf of a child. This leads to accountability, transparency and best practice overall.

Child Safety Processes

How satisfied are you with the following Child Safety processes?



It is positive to see that more than half of carers (58%) reported feeling either always or mostly satisfied **with the approval and renewal process** and that overall only 8% of carers reported never feeling satisfied in this area.

Carers were asked if they were satisfied with the **completion of Placement Agreements**. This area is explored in more detail further in this report. However, given that Placement Agreements are a legislative requirement it is concerning that only 47% of carers reported feeling always or mostly satisfied that they are completed at the beginning of every placement and with regular reviews.

In relation to **home visits being completed by Child Safety Officer** 42% of carers reported feeling sometimes or never satisfied that this was occurring.

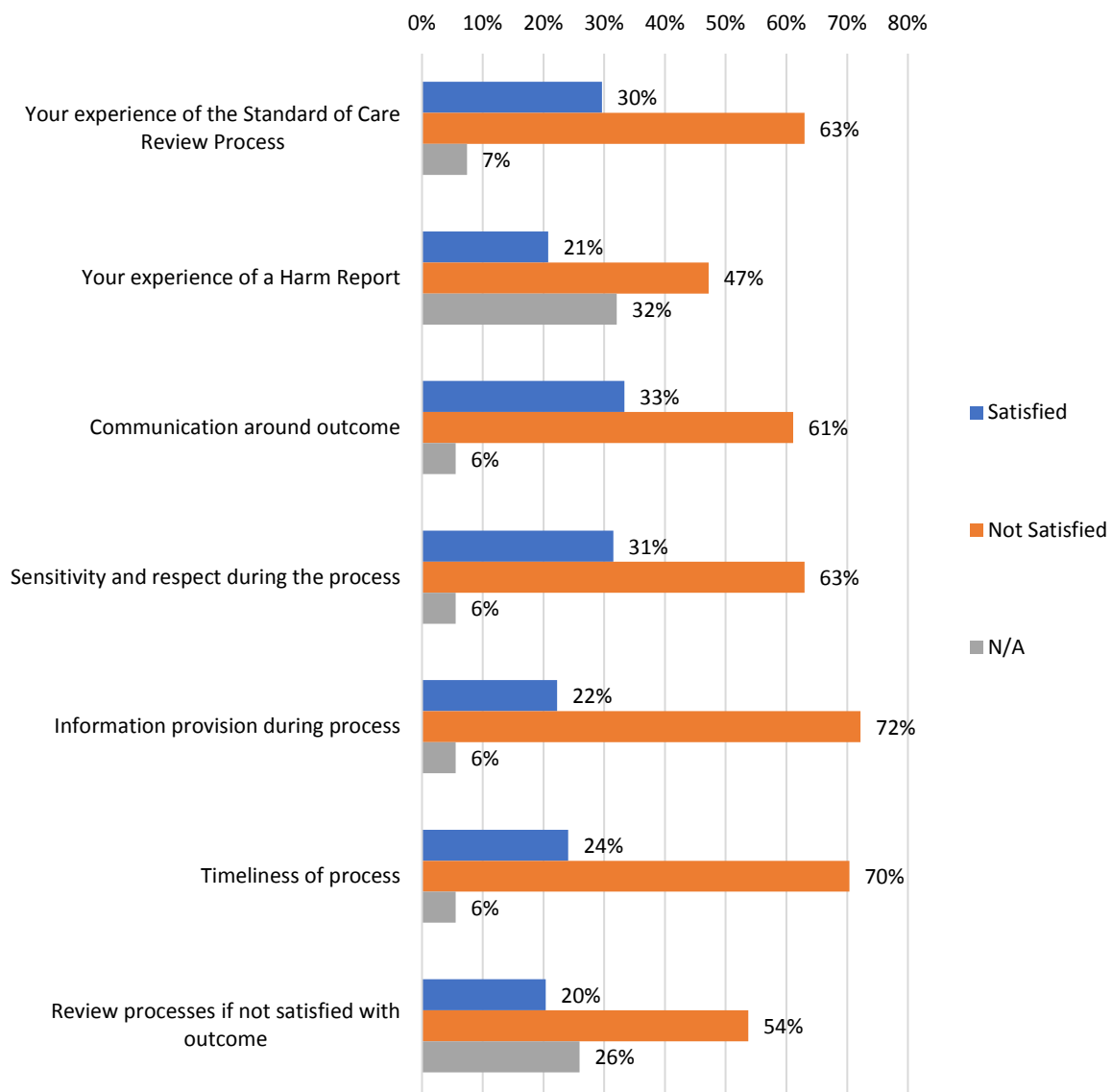
48% of carers reported feeling only satisfied sometimes or never **with their ability to engage in Case Plan meetings for children in their care**. Given statements within the Statement of Commitment that recognise a critical role in participating in decisions affecting children in their care, these figures should reflect a much higher percentage.

Standard of Care/Harm Report Process

Carers were asked if they had experienced a Standard of Care or Harm Report, and of those surveyed 32% (54) had been through the process; they further offered the following information relating to that experience.

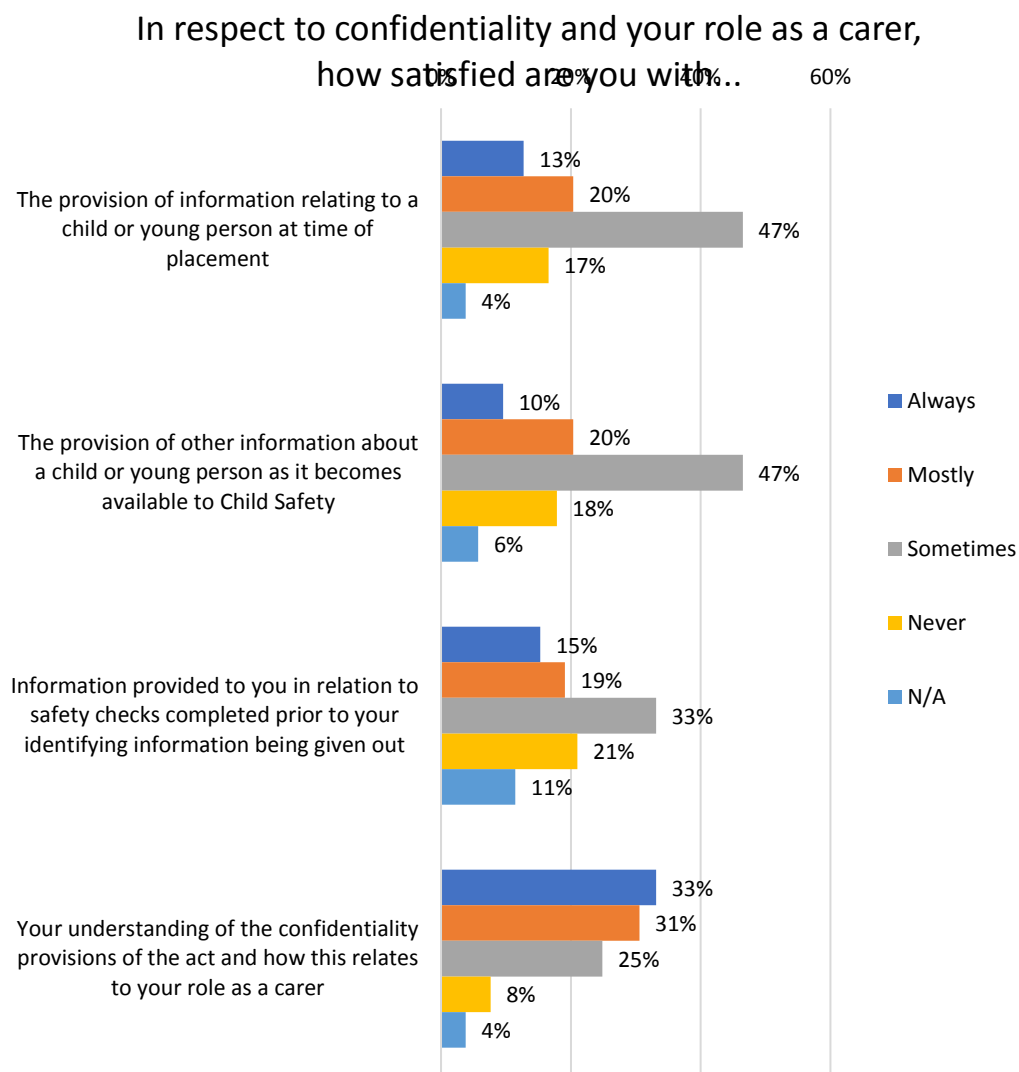
Overall, of the carers from South West who responded that they had been through the SOC/Harm Report process, they were not satisfied with their experience.

If you did experience a Standard of Care Review (SOCR) or Harm Report, how satisfied are you with...



Confidentiality

Carers were asked to provide their responses to a range of questions around confidentiality.

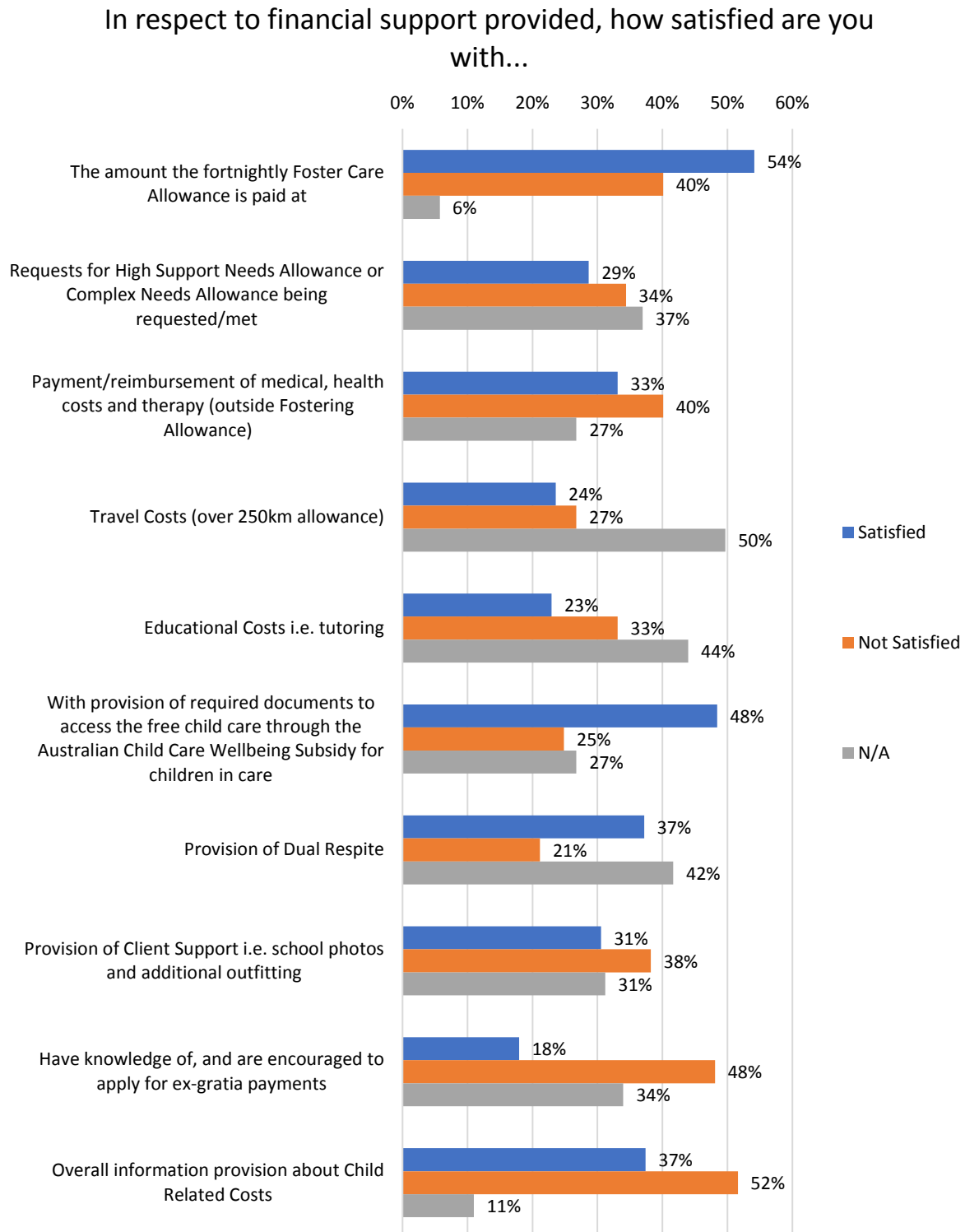


Whilst it is recognised Child Safety very rarely have all the information at time of placement, over time Child Safety gathers information which is vital to pass on to carers as this allows the carers to understand a child’s trauma better and provide appropriate care. Unfortunately 65% of carers reported that they feel **information provision about a child as it becomes available** is only shared with them sometimes or never. It is noted this is an improvement from the 2018 Carer Survey (68%) and the 2016 survey (73%). Given this sample is larger than previous surveys, it’s great to see a downward trend.

54% of carers reported their satisfaction level at sometimes or never with **information provided in relation to safety checks prior to any identifying information being given out**. 64% shared that they were always or mostly satisfied with their understanding of the **confidentiality provisions of the act and how it related to their role as a carer**.

Financial

Carers were asked to report on their satisfaction level in relation to financial support, please see below graph for detailed responses.



In summary, the dissatisfaction at the **amount of the fortnightly foster carer allowance** has continued to increase. In previous surveys it has been reported as high as 80% satisfaction, however in this 2020 survey it appears to be continuing its downward trend to a current level of 54% of carers who responded to this question feeling satisfied. This of course could be attributed to many factors, including the cost of living not being compatible with the CPI index, particularly around household expenses of electricity, water, food and other essentials as outlined in the Executive Summary. Not least the COVID-19 situation that plunged everyone into the unknown and forced stress on many household budgets, foster and kinship carers included.

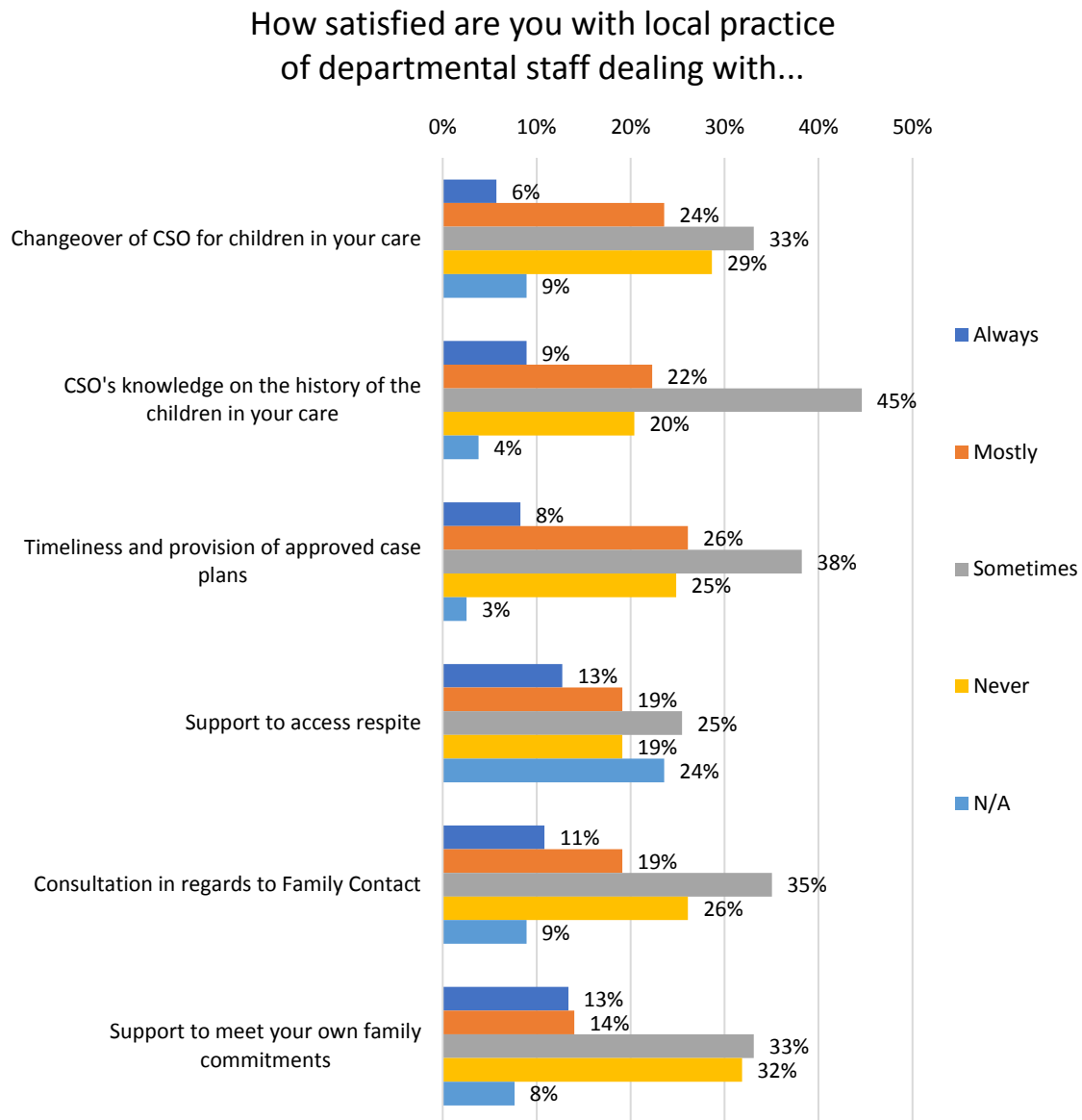
Of those carers who felt that the question relating to **requests for HSNA and CSNA** was applicable, 54% (54 carers) reported feeling not satisfied with their requests being met.

It is pleasing to note that the **provision of required documentation to access the free childcare subsidy for children in care** had a 48% satisfaction rate and only 25% were not satisfied (60% in 2018), with 27% noting the questions didn't apply to them. It is 2 years since the implementation of the subsidy and whilst there was initially a level of frustration with the new system, clearly a lot of education has gone into the sector to help carers, departmental staff and fostering and kinship care staff all understand what is required. QFKC continues to work with Child Safety to develop a fact sheet for all stakeholders to understand their responsibilities in the application of ASCC which should further improve overall awareness.

Finally, 52% of carers reported feeling not satisfied with the **overall information provision relating to Child Related Costs**.

Local Practice in CSSC

Carers were asked a range of questions around their satisfaction level across a few pertinent areas, this is their response.



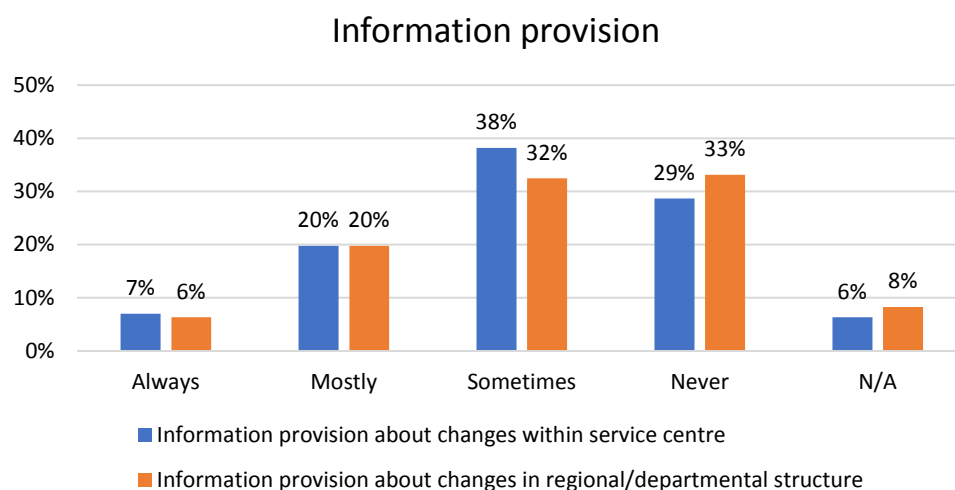
It is positive to see a slight decrease in the dissatisfaction rate from carers around **changeover of CSO for children in their care**. In this current survey there were 62% of carers completing the survey who reported feeling sometimes or never satisfied whilst this was reported at 70% during the 2018 Carer Survey.

65% of carers were either sometimes or never satisfied with the **CSO's knowledge on the history of the children in their care**. 63% of carers reported feeling either sometimes or never satisfied with the **timeliness and provision of approved Case Plans**.

Carers were asked if they were satisfied with **support in accessing respite**, and whilst this was not applicable to 24% of carers, there were 32% either always or mostly satisfied, and 44% sometimes or never satisfied. Respite can be an essential element of placement support when used appropriately, it can also create an extended network for children and provide self-care opportunities for carers. QFKC recognises the lack of respite options available across the state, so whilst Child Safety are likely to be supportive of respite for children and young people when deemed to be in their best interests, it is not always possible for Fostering and Kinship Care Services to have respite placement options available.

61% of carers reported feeling only sometimes or never satisfied in **being consulted in regard to family contact**. This dissatisfaction rate has decreased from 73% in the 2018 Carer Survey which is positive. Carers often have critical observations and information to input into decision making. Consultation does not mean that carers make the decision, it means that Child Safety spend time accessing critical information the carer holds in experience of providing 24/7 care to the child. Consulting with carers in matters such as family contact also aligns with the Statement of Commitment.

With regard to the question around **support to meeting their own family commitments** 65% of carers felt that sometimes or never were their needs taken into consideration, and only 27% of carers reported feeling always or mostly that they were considered.



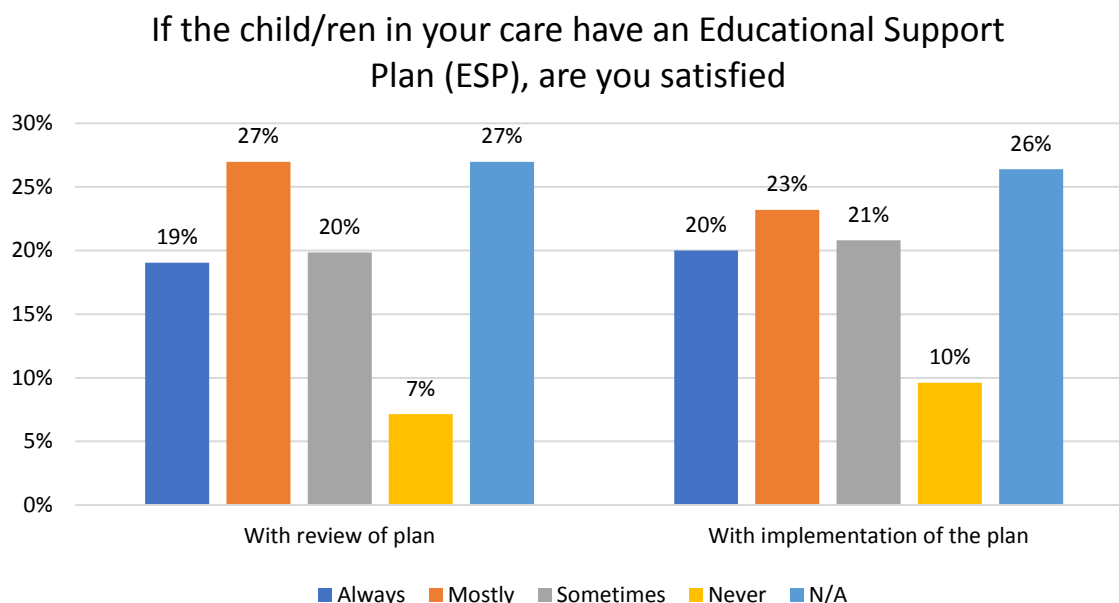
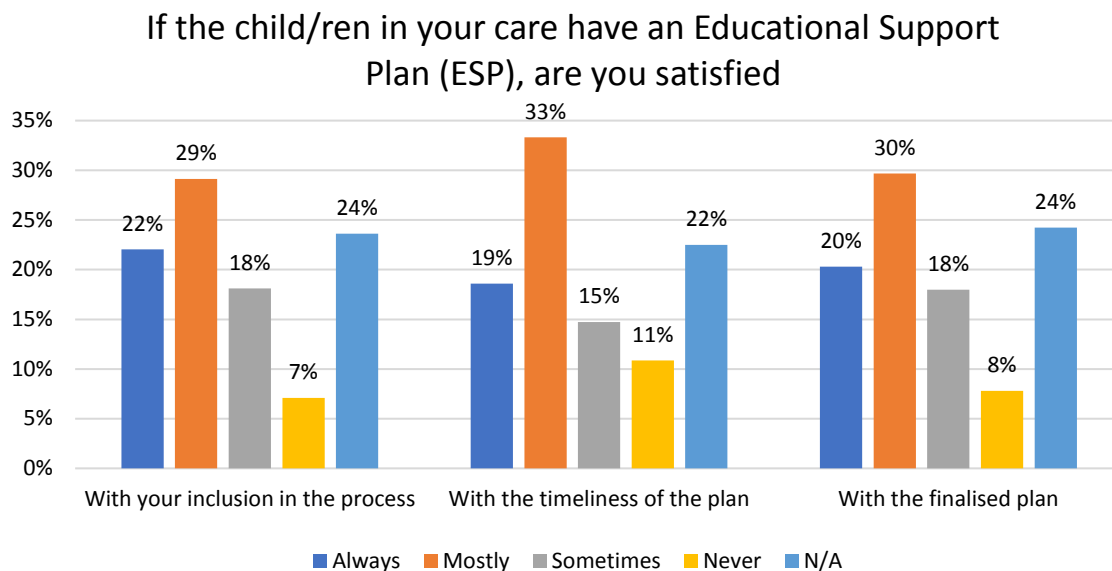
As demonstrated in above graph, carers continue to express overwhelmingly that they are only sometimes or never **kept up to date about changes in either their CSSC or region/departmental structure**. Whilst the sector has introduced the Carer Connect App, and carers are gradually using this tool as a means of being updated, it must be acknowledged that all carers are individuals and should be communicated with in a way that meets their needs. For some this will continue to be via email, phone and even face to face. The Carer Connect app is mentioned earlier in this report, and pleasingly 77% of carers who completed this survey were aware of the app, however only 34% were currently using it.

QFKC would like to acknowledge the recent work and efforts from the Southern Downs Child and Family Service Centre in addressing the issue of communication with carers. With the introduction of monthly newsletters which provide updates relating to Child Safety, staffing, projects and more, carers attached to this Service Centre will certainly be noticing a shift in communication.

Education Support Plans

Carers were asked if they had a current ESP plan in place for the child/ren in their care, and 59% reported they did have a plan. This is similar to that reported in the 2018 Carer Survey.

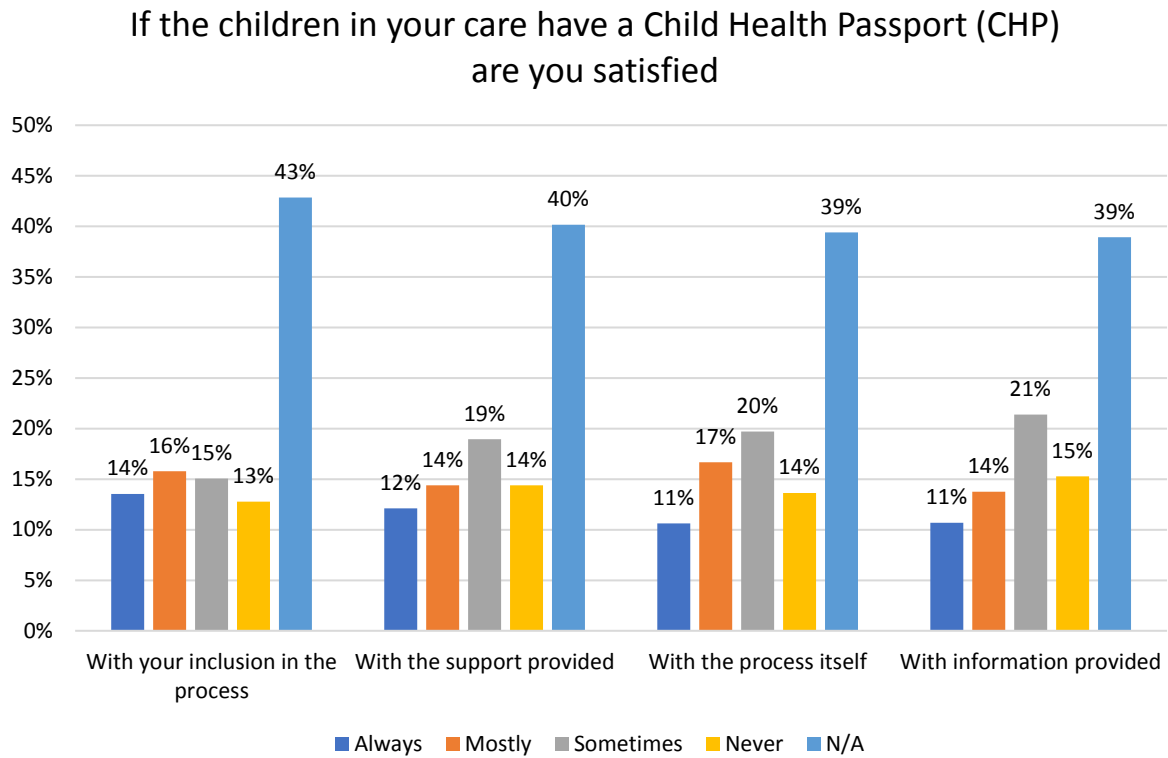
Carers were then asked a range of questions relating to the ESP process and their satisfaction is shown below.



It would seem from the above data that most carers have reported they are either always or mostly satisfied with the processes surrounding ESP plans. Satisfaction rates did seem to go down very slightly in respect to the actual review and implementation of plans.

Child Health Passports

Carers were asked if the child/ren in their care had a current Child Health Passport, and 50% reported having one. A range of other questions were then asked relating to the processes of Child Health Passports and how satisfied they were, carers reported as follows:

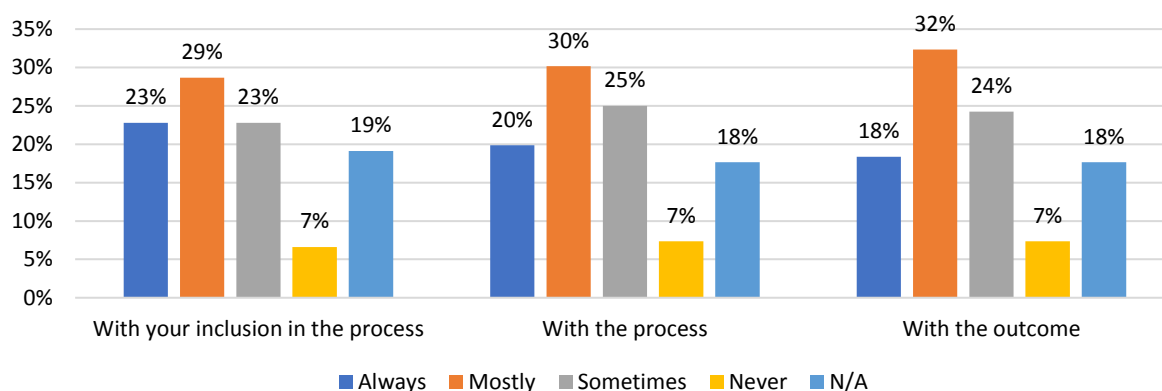


Placement Agreements

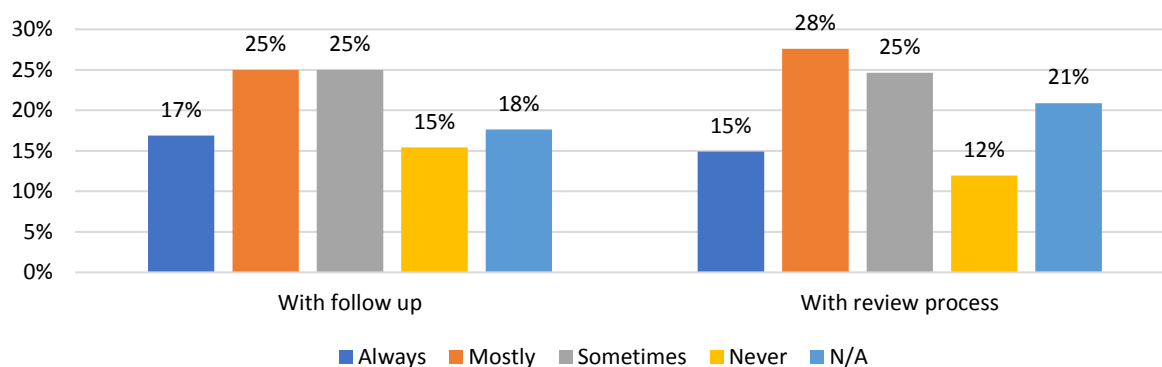
Carers were asked if they had a current Placement Agreement generated from a placement meeting, 63% of carers reported they do, which is similar to the 2018 Carer Survey results.

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to their satisfaction around the processes of Placement Agreements with the following responses.

If you do have a current Placement Agreement that has been generated from a Placement Meeting, are you satisfied...



If you do have a current Placement Agreement that has been generated from a Placement Meeting, are you satisfied...



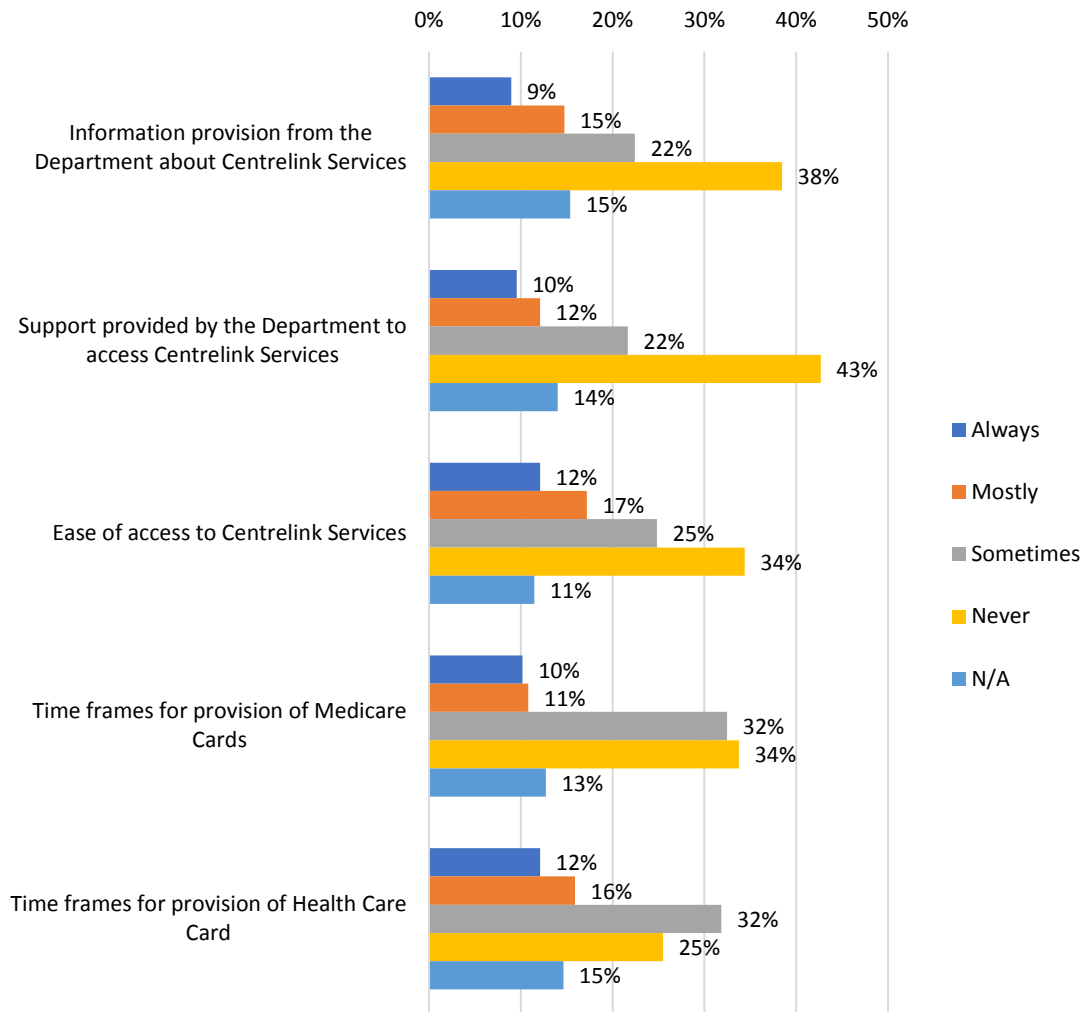
It is positive to see that carers are mostly satisfied with Placement Agreements across the areas of inclusion, process and outcomes although the follow up and review process continues to require attention.

Carers were then asked whether they received a copy of the Placement Meeting minutes, and overwhelmingly 81% stated they did not, a similar result to the 2018 Carer Survey data.

Centrelink

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to Centrelink and how they were supported to access services through Centrelink from the CSSC, responses were as follows.

Interaction with Centrelink is often a part of accepting a placement. How satisfied are you with...

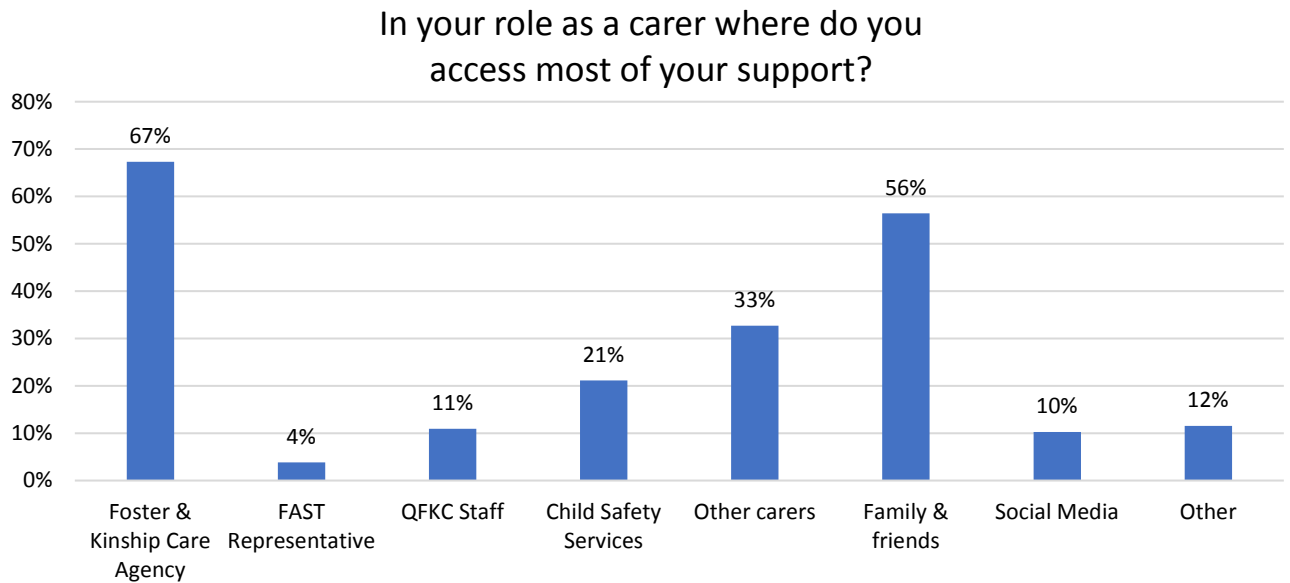


It is evident from the above graph that carers are feeling a high level of dissatisfaction in this area with the majority of carers feeling that they never **receive information or support from their CSSC in relation to how and what they can access from Centrelink.**

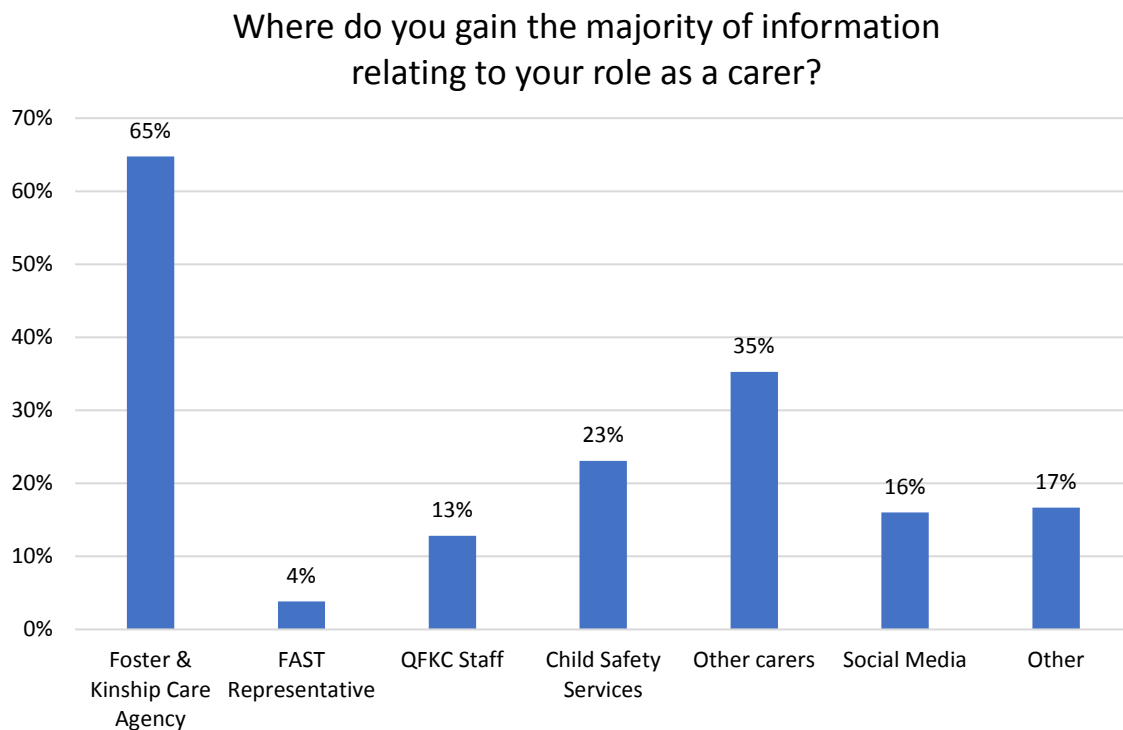
Carers were then asked a question relating to **ease of access to Centrelink Services** for the children in their care, and 59% reported feeling only sometimes or never satisfied in this area. 66% of carers reported only sometimes or never feeling satisfied with the **timeframes for provision of Medicare Cards**, and 57% feeling sometimes or never feeling satisfied with the **timeframes for provision of Health Care Cards.**

Support

Carers were asked where they accessed the majority of their support from.



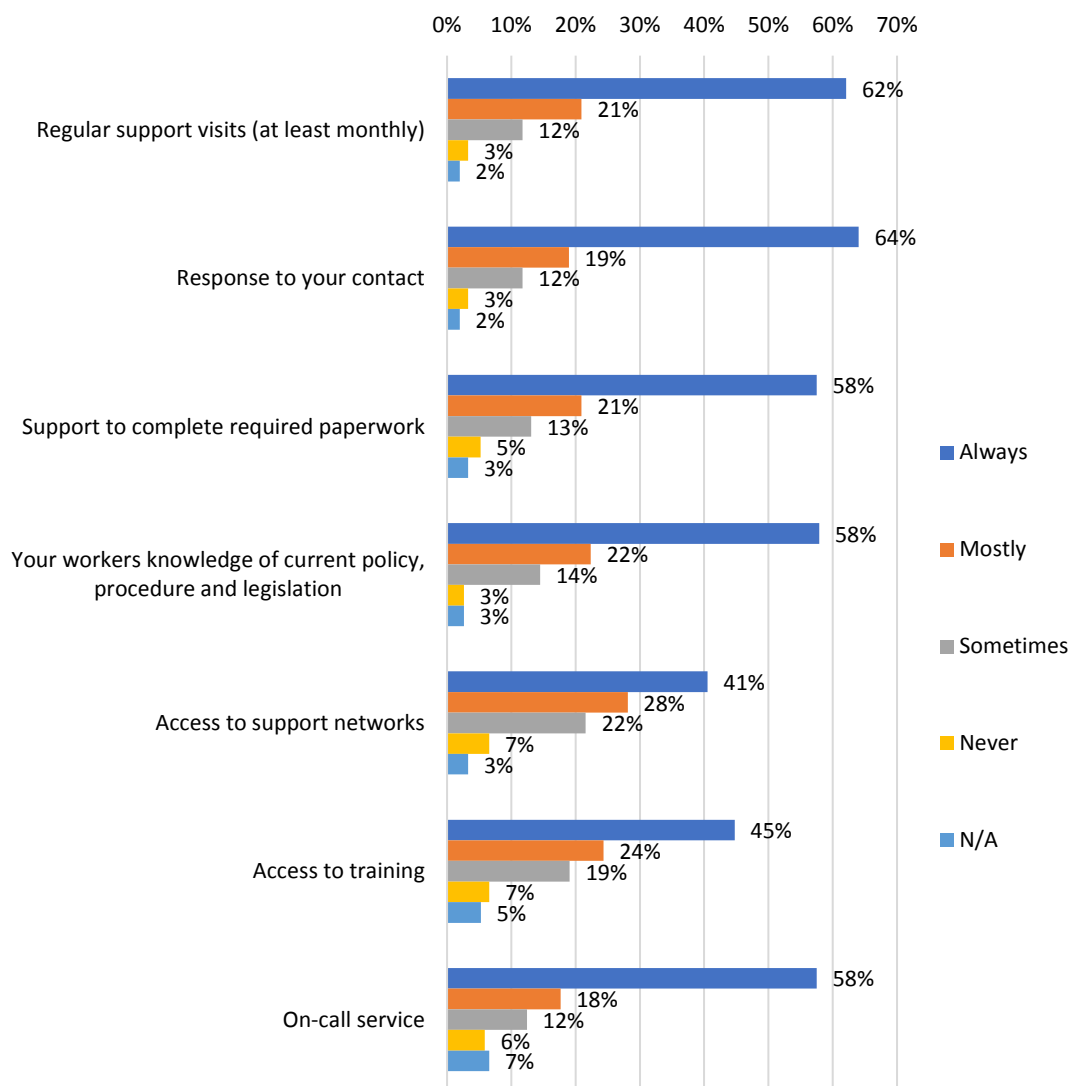
Carers were asked where they access the majority of their information from as carers.



Foster and Kinship Care Programs

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to the support provided by Fostering and Kinship Care Agencies. Firstly, carers were asked if they were attached to a Fostering and Kinship Care Agency and of the 156 who answered this question 149 answered yes, and 7 were still not attached to an agency.

If you were supported by an agency, are you satisfied with...

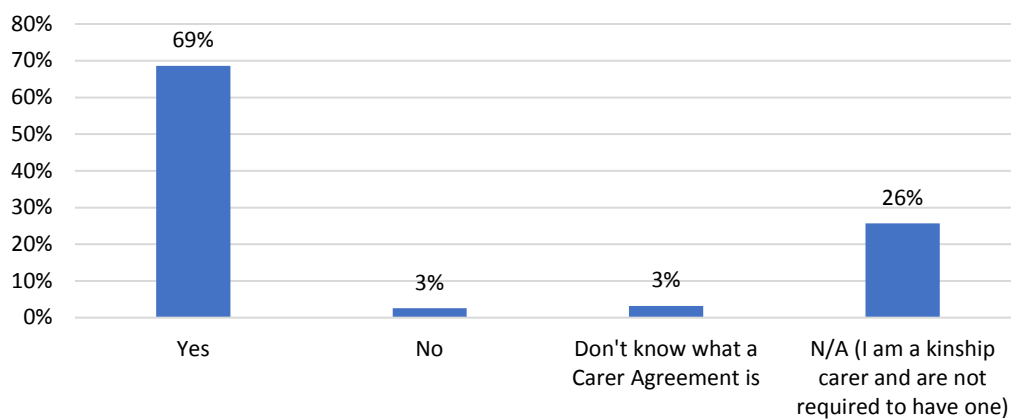


It is positive to see that the majority of carers responding are always or mostly satisfied with the support provided by their agency. Although **access to support networks** and **access to training** is an area worth exploring further between agencies and carers they are supporting in South West region. Training that is relevant and current is an aspect for carers to have access to assist them in providing quality care to children and young people placed in their care.

Foster Carer Agreements

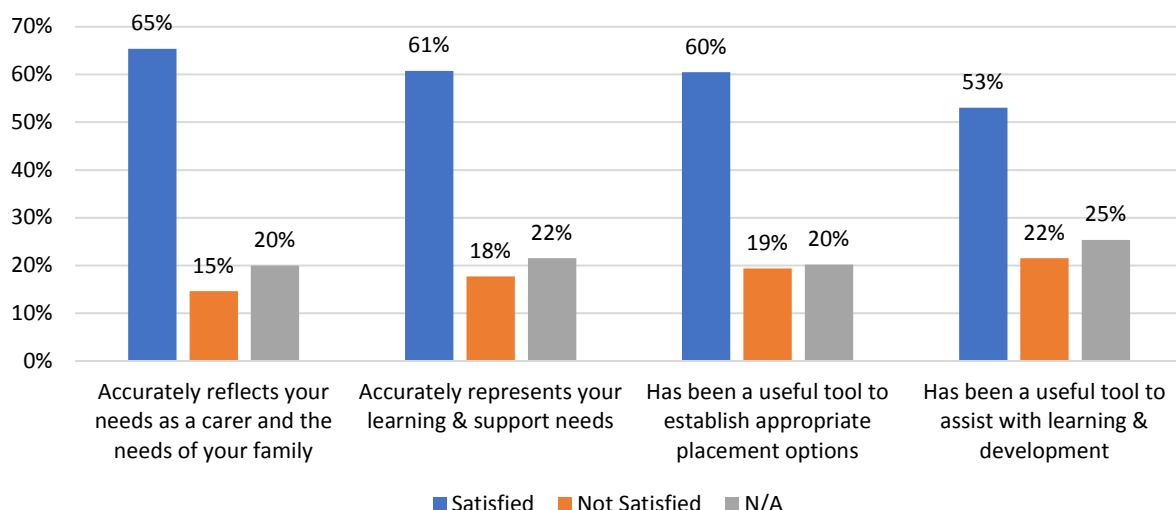
Carers were asked if they had a current Foster Carer Agreement, and whilst a high percentage did have one, there was a considerable number of kinship carers who completed the survey and therefore are not required to have one. Kinship carers could also account for some of those who did not know what one was.

If you are a foster carer, do you have a current Foster Carer Agreement? (please note kinship carers are not required to have one)



Carers were then asked a range of questions relating to the usefulness of the Foster Carer Agreement and responded as follows:

If you do have a Foster Carer Agreement, would you state that the Agreement...

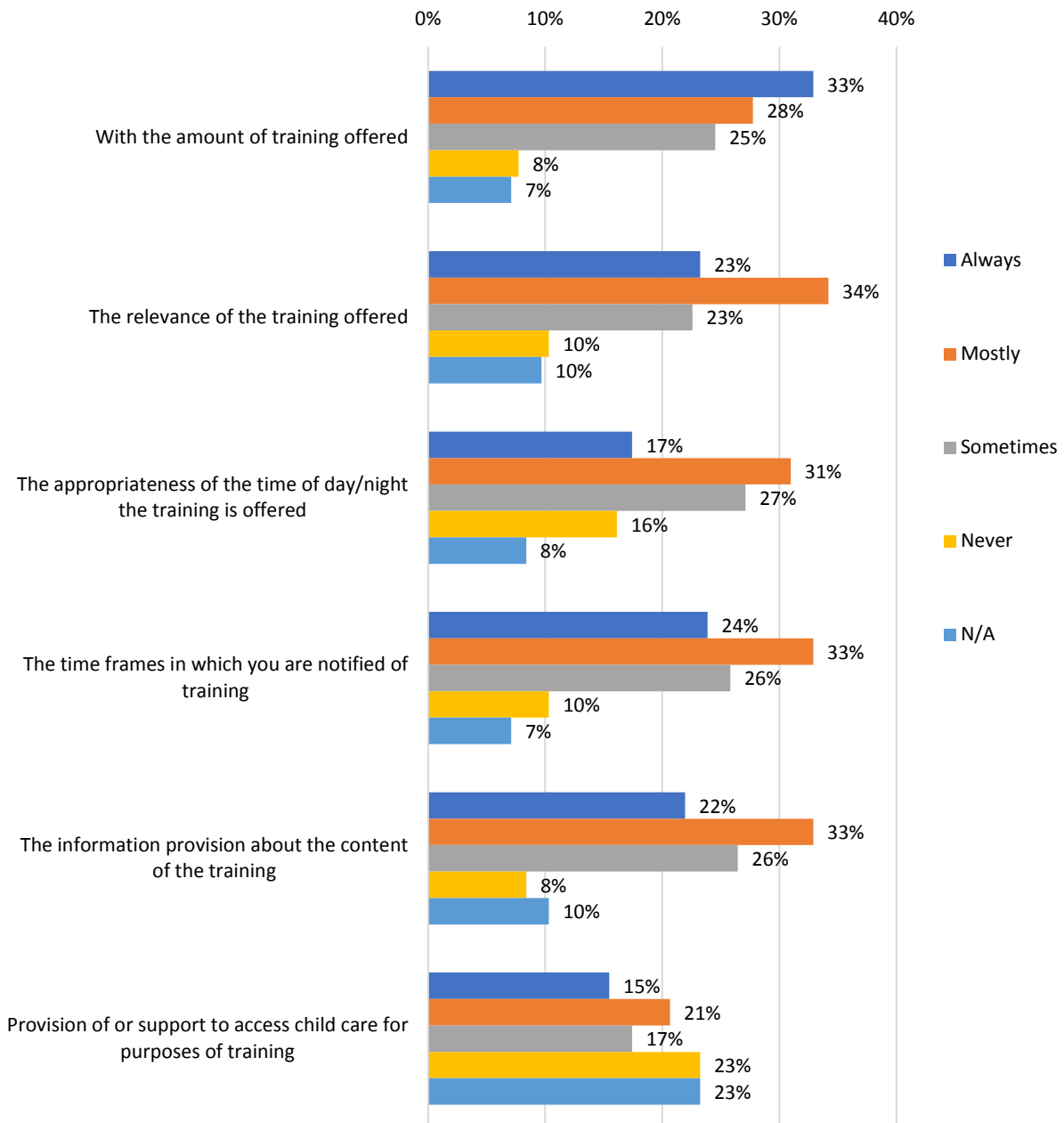


Carers have reported high levels of satisfaction across the board in relation to the Foster Carer Agreements.

Training

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to their training experiences and responded as follows.

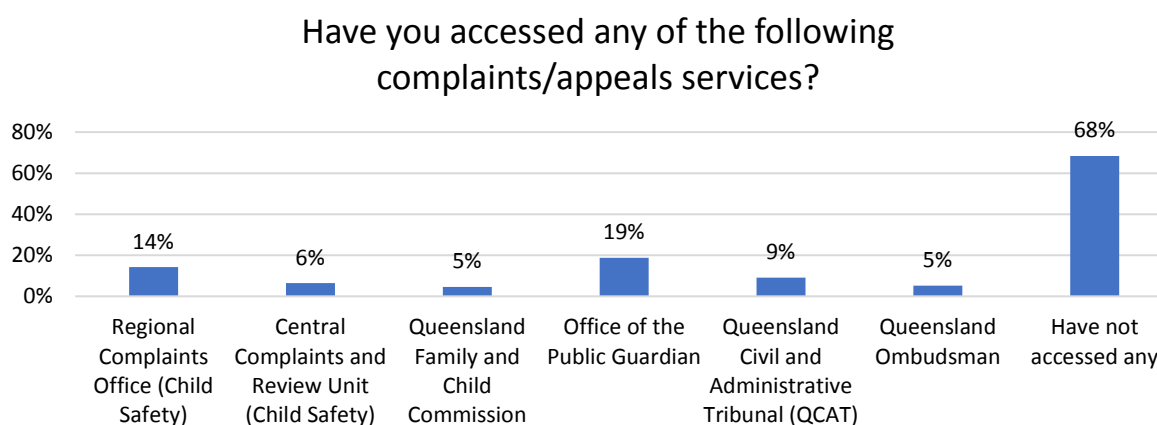
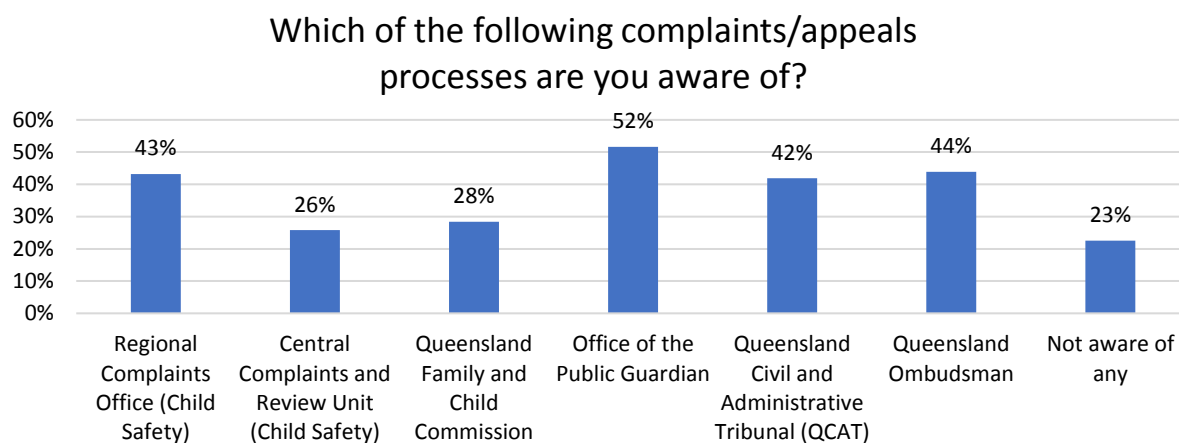
Training is part of support and the right of carers to have training to build their skills. How satisfied are you...



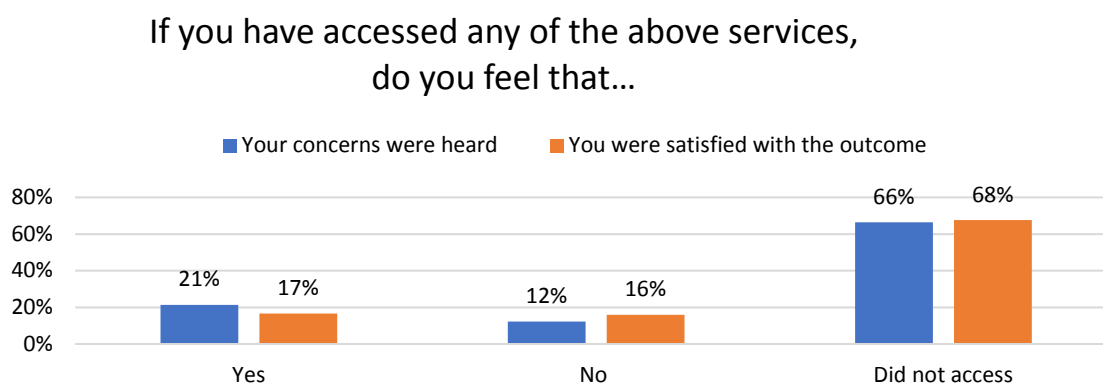
Carers were asked whether they were satisfied with **provision of or support to access childcare during training**. Only 36% of carers reported feeling always or mostly satisfied in this area.

Complaints/Appeals

Carers were asked to identify which complaint/appeal processes they were aware of and which services they had accessed. Of the 212 carers from South West region who completed the survey, 155 carers responded.



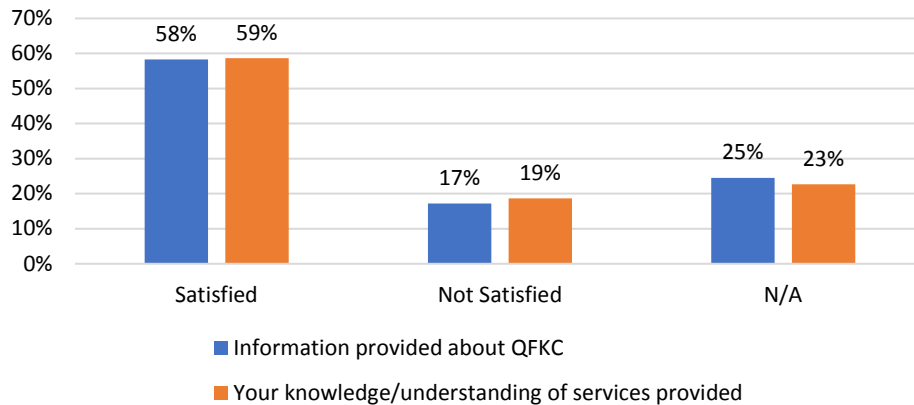
Carers were asked if they felt heard and were satisfied with the outcome regarding their contact with the above services.



Queensland Foster and Kinship Care

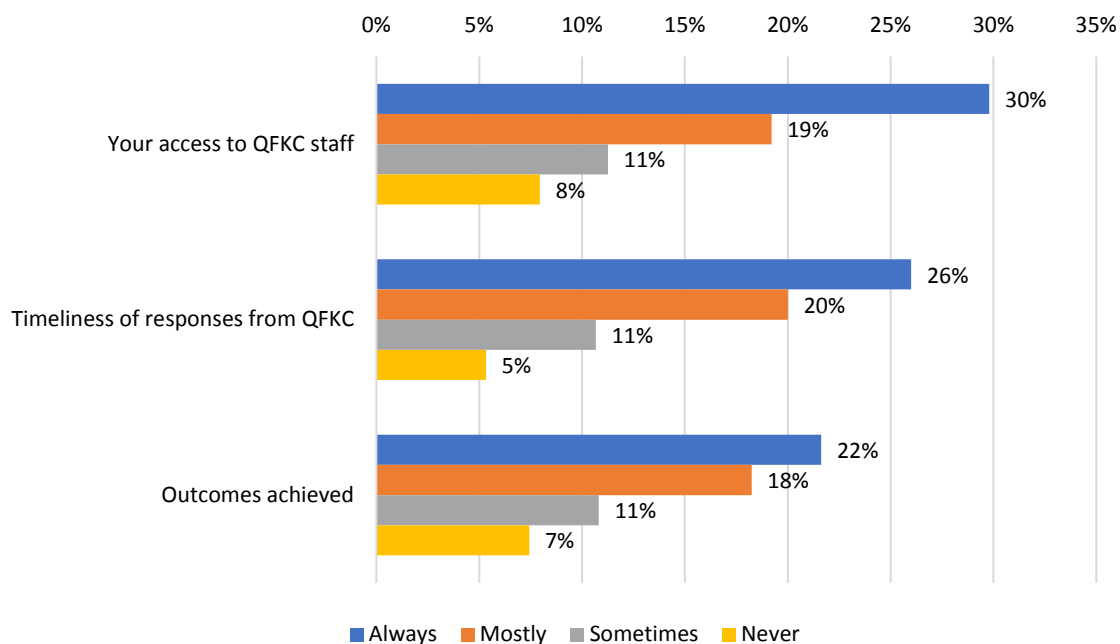
Carers were asked a range of questions relating to Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (QFKC). Firstly, carers were asked if they were satisfied with the provision of information about QFKC, 58% of carers reported satisfaction. In respect to knowledge and understanding of services provided 59% of carers reported feeling satisfied. 17% to 19% of carers were not satisfied in these areas.

QFKC provides support and advocacy to Foster and kinship carers. How satisfied are you with...



Carers were then asked a range of questions relating to their experiences if they had contact with QFKC, please note that carers who have selected not applicable, have not been included in this data as it is not relevant.

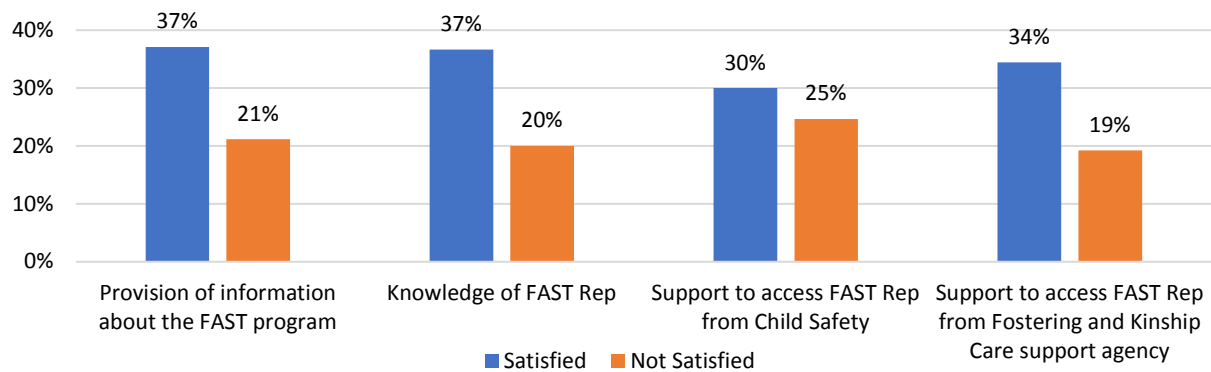
How satisfied are you with...



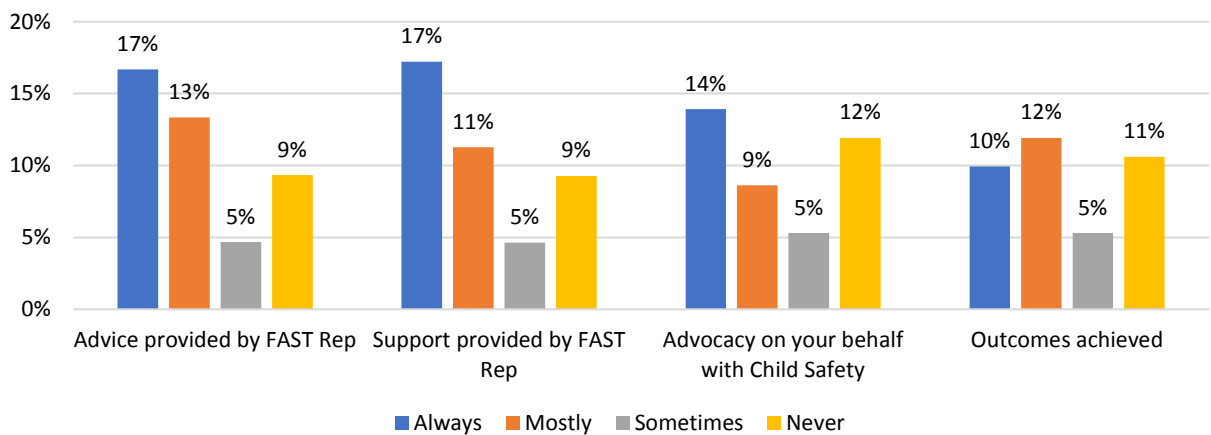
FAST Program

Carers were asked a range of questions relating to the FAST program (foster carer advocacy support team) attached to QFKC. Once again, carers who have selected not applicable, have not been included in this data as it is not relevant.

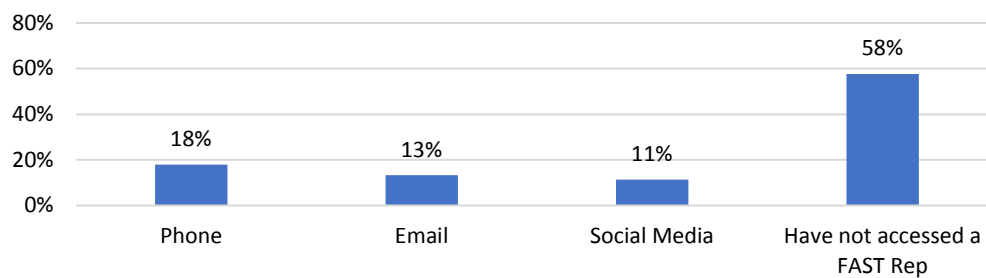
QFKC supports the FAST program. How satisfied are you with...



How satisfied are you with...



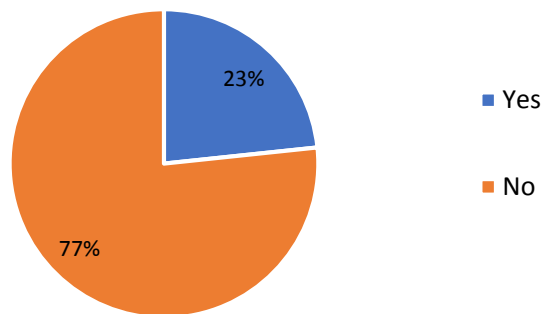
How do you mostly access your FAST Rep?



Partners in Care

QFKC again included a section in this year's survey on Partners in Care, the following results were received.

Have you noticed any positive change in practice since Partners in Care workshops occurred in 2017?



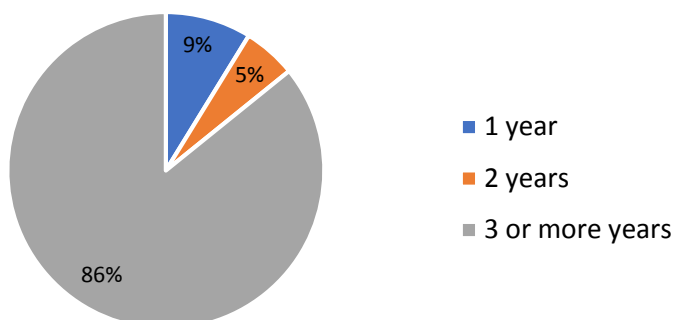
Child Safety – Culture and Practice

The 2020 Carer Survey included a question asking carers if they considered culture and practice in Child Safety had improved in the last 3 years. Of the 150 carers in South West who completed this question, only 33% consider it had improved, with 67% suggesting that it hadn't improved.

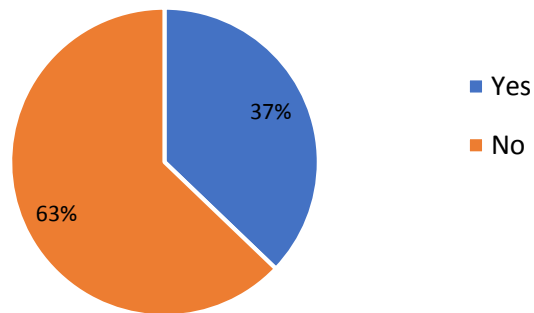
Looking Forward

During this section of the report, carers were asked a range of questions relating to their future as carers and what they would like to see change.

How long do you intend to continue caring for?

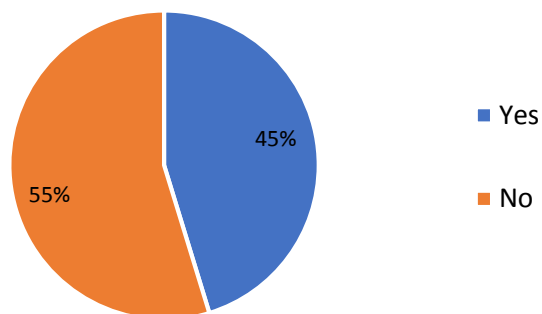


Is there any support/issue that would influence this decision?



Finally - carers were asked...

would you advise a friend to be a carer?



The QFKC 2020 Carer Survey Report seeks to understand carers' experiences through a survey format that includes both data related feedback and comments from carers. The data related feedback helps to develop a clear visual picture from the carer community and the comments provide 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 Survey Reports. One is unfiltered and provides the data alongside all comments made by carers and the second one provides data only. The unfiltered report is provided to Child Safety so they can gain better insight into carers' experiences, and many of the comments provide identifying and detailed information from carers which is not intended for public viewing. QFKC respects the right for 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 carer who has contributed by way of completing the 2020 Carer 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.