

Foster and Kinship Carer

Exit Survey Report

2020 - 2021

Executive Summary



**Queensland
Foster and
Kinship Care**

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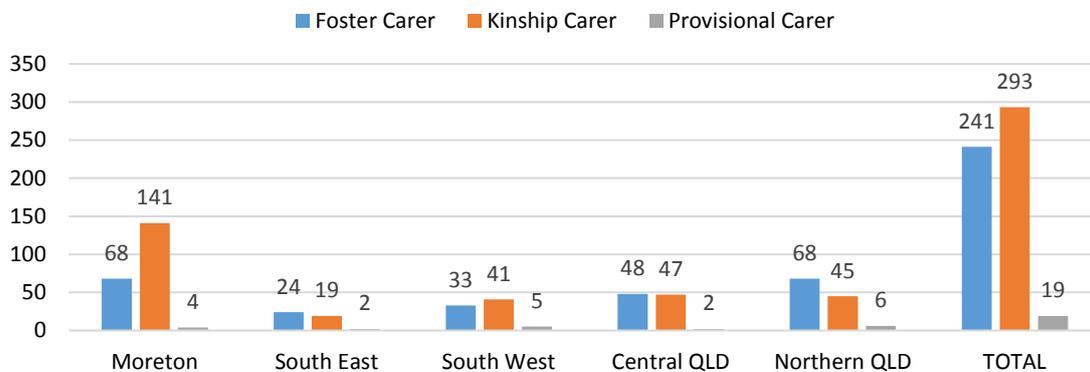
Executive Summary

Information relating to End of Carer Approval Notices

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

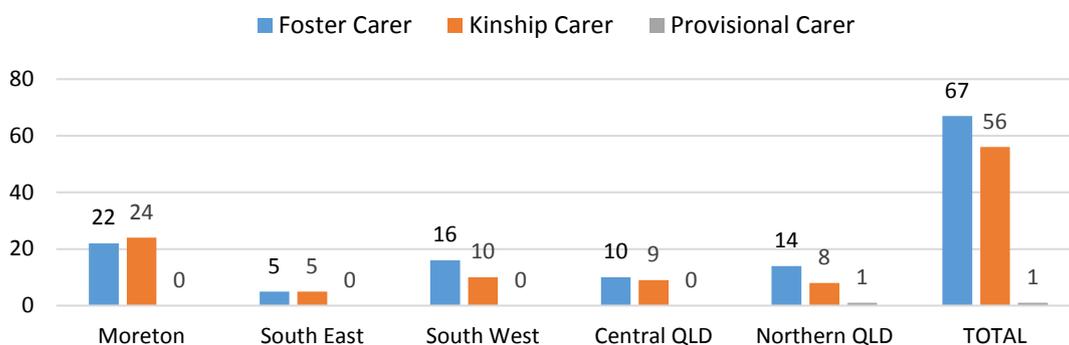
QFKC received a total of 553 Exit Interview referrals for the period **1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021**. There was a total of 241 Foster Carers, 293 Kinship Carers and 19 Provisional Carers.

**End of Carer Approval Notices received by QFKC
 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2021**



Carers exiting the system were invited to participate in our online survey via an email link. For those who preferred, a paper survey was posted and the completed form was returned and entered into the online survey by QFKC. There were some requests for a telephone interview, and during that process the information was entered online during the interview.

Exit Surveys Completed



Of the 129 carer who participated in the survey, 67 were Foster Carers, 56 Kinship Carers and 1 was a Provisional Carer. (5 carers skipped answering this question).

The participation rate was 23% for this reporting period.

Procedure for Responding to Notifications

Once QFKC have received the *End of Carer Approval Notice* from the Department, the following process takes place:

- A letter is sent to the carer/s advising that an *End of Carer Approval Notice* had been received from the Department, and inviting them to provide feedback about their experience as a carer, by completing a survey. The letter provides a number of options including online, paper survey or telephone interview.
- If they wish to complete the survey online, the letter includes the survey link. If they prefer to complete a paper survey or telephone interview, contact details are provided to request this.
- Paper surveys are posted as requested, and include a reply paid envelope for easy return. Telephone interviews are scheduled when it is mutually convenient. All returned paper surveys and telephone interviews are input into the online survey by QFKC.
- After a two week period QFKC make a follow up phone call with the carer/s, where possible, to acknowledge if the letter had been received, and discuss the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences. Where an email address and no phone contact details have been provided on the *End of Carer Approval Notice* QFKC would follow up by email.

Over the years QFKC have identified that we do not receive all *End of Carer Approval Notices* for carer families who have exited the foster and kinship care system. Recent figures sourced from the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs website indicates a total of 1594 carer families exited the care system for the year ending 31st March 2021. Whilst this report spans the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, if we were to do a direct comparison with the number of notices received by QFKC for the 12 months ending 31st March 2021, only 36% of carers who had exited the system at that time, had been offered the opportunity to participate in the QFKC exit survey. In order for exiting carers to have the opportunity of providing feedback this return rate needs to improve to ensure we capture as much feedback as possible.

Overall Data and Findings

This report outlines the feedback from all 129 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 all Exit Reports since 2014.

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.

Where the response identified the carer left due to issues with the children placed with them, the following reasons were stated:

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

With regard to issues relating to the children it was identified that a lack of support resulted in the carer being unable to manage complex behaviours and therefore, 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.

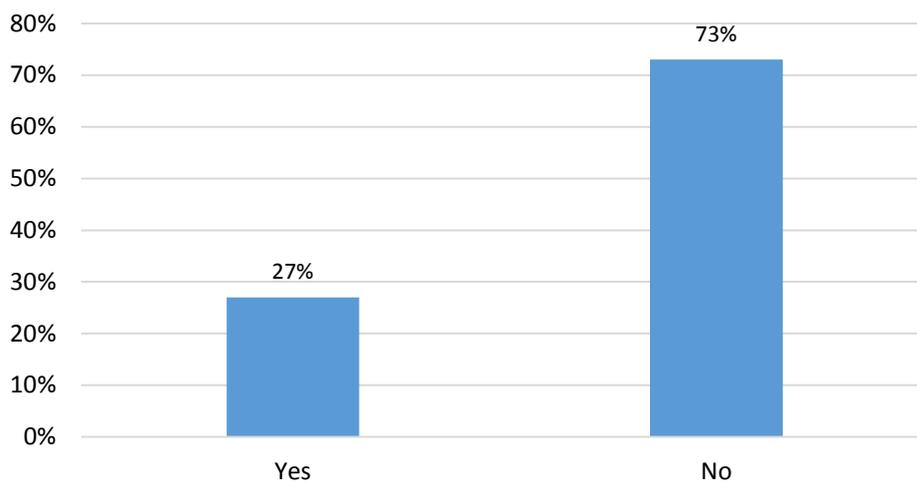
The findings relating to what were the most challenging aspects of being a carer have remained consistent over the years that QFKC has been undertaking the Exit Survey Report. The lack of communication and feeling part of a care team is dominant throughout the regional reports and this would be suggestive that it is a statewide issue with the feedback provided.

Some areas of care were identified as equally satisfied and dissatisfied in their responses, in particular:

- 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.

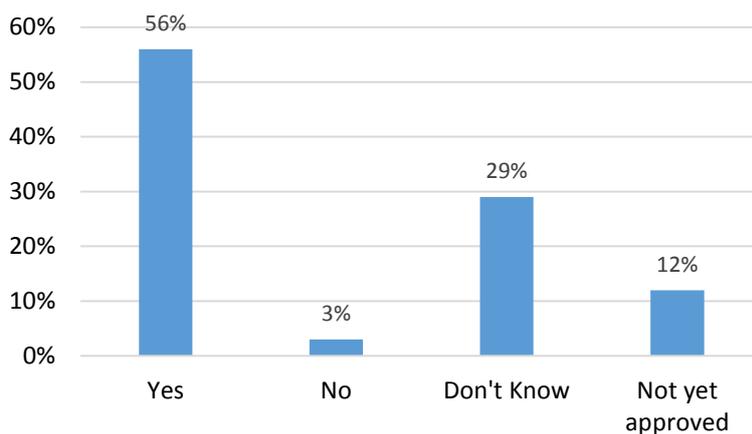
There was a question about training, and overall 73% of carers who completed the survey, had received no training.

Have you attended any training in the last 12 months?



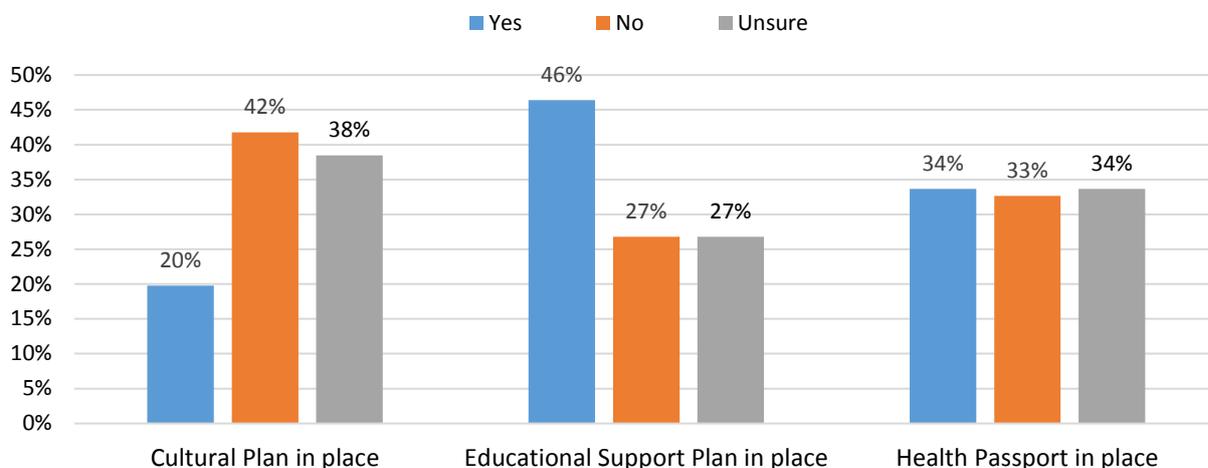
The question around Foster Care Agreements resulted in 56% of respondents advising they had an agreement in place, however 29% stated they did not know.

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



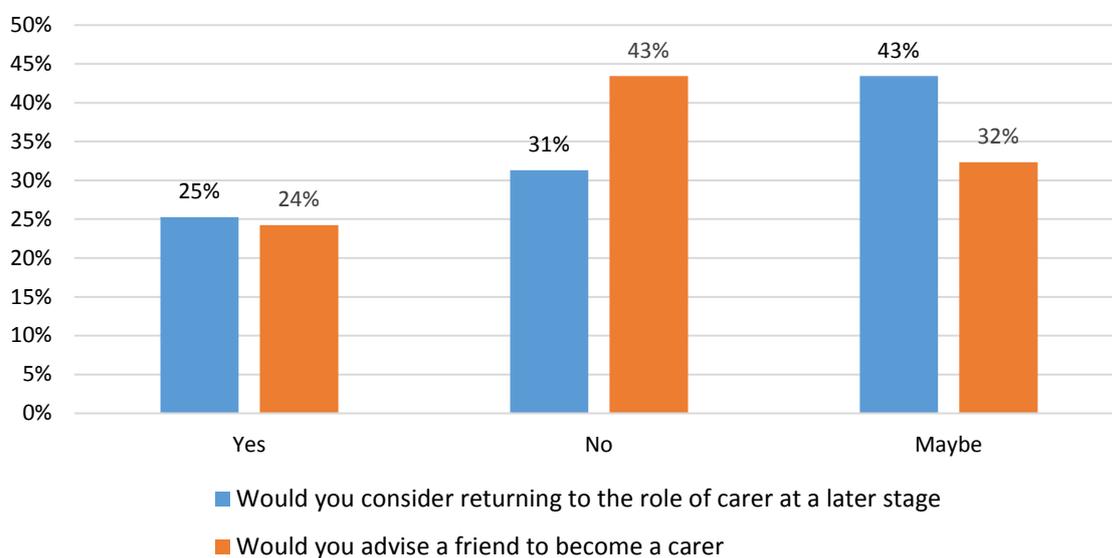
In relation to the needs of the child the following information was identified:

Child's needs



Overall 68% of carers stated either yes or maybe, that they would consider returning to the role of carer, and 56% stated they would encourage a friend to become a carer.

Overall



Summary

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 67 Foster Carers and 56 Kinship Carers, there would be a percentage where their carer status ended due to the child returning home and the exiting 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.

Report presented on behalf of QFKC by:

Hazel Little
President

Bryan Smith
Executive Director

20 August 2021