

Your Life, Your Care:

A survey of the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-18yrs in Flintshire

In Feb-Mar 2018 all children in care in Flintshire were asked to participate in an online survey. This is a summary of the findings.

61 children and young people responded to the survey: a 36% response rate with boys under-represented.

What is working well?



The majority of the youngest children and young people felt safe and settled in their placements. All 4-7 year olds and 90% of 11-18 year olds reported feeling safe 'all or most of the time'. Similarly, all the youngest children and 82% of the young people felt settled.



The majority of children and young people trusted their carers and 97% thought that their carers were interested in their education. Carers are providing sensitive parenting to young people (11-18yrs) – 92% felt their carers noticed how they were feeling, which is unusually high.



More looked after children and young people were living in a household with a pet in comparison with children living in Wales and compared to other children in care.



More young people (96%) in Flintshire felt they were being taught life skills compared to young people (86%) in other local authorities.



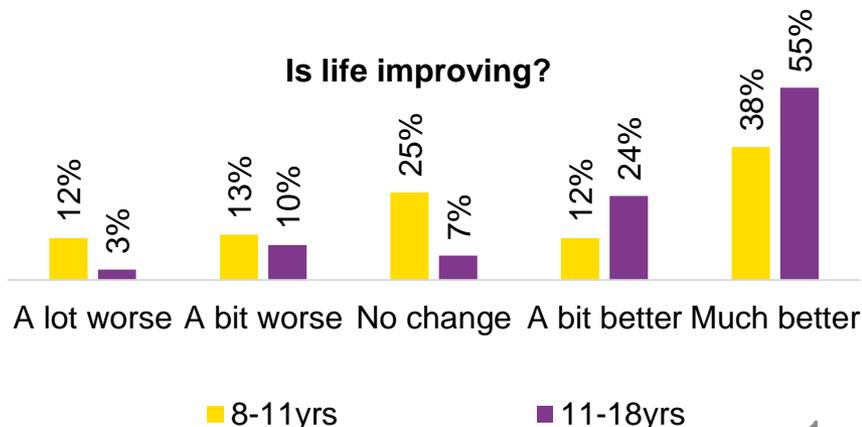
School is working well for the youngest children (4-7yrs) – all reported enjoying school.

I want it to be more awesome.
8-11yrs

What could make care better?
Nothing as I'm happy with my life as it is.
11-18yrs

I would like to go Split dancing.
4-7yrs

Is life improving?



What could be improved?

4-7 year olds



The majority (62%) of younger children (4-7yrs) did not understand why they were in care.

If I knew why I had a social worker I would understand more.
4-7yrs



Half of this age group did not know who their social worker was



8-11 year olds

There were only 18 responses from the 8-11yrs age group but they were the least settled in their placements.

- Only 50% thought their lives were improving
- Four (22%) felt they were unable to explore nature and the outdoors in comparison with 11% of Welsh children.



All the children (8-11yrs) and 73% of young people (11-18yrs) had contact with at least one parent. Most children and young people wanted longer and more frequent contact with relatives and more information about why contact decisions had been made.

I would like to see my sisters more please.
11-18yrs

I would like to have contact in different places.
8-11yrs

What would make care better?

For my mummy to come to my house and have dinner with us.
4-7yrs



More than a third of 11-18yrs had had three or more social workers in the previous year.

Low well-being



Two of the ten children aged 4-7yrs gave responses that suggested they had low well-being. The children did not understand why they were in care, wanted more family contact, and had poorer relationships with adults and peers.



The two children in the 8-11yrs group with low well-being disliked school, were afraid of bullying and had poor relationships with their social workers.



Nine of the 33 young people (11-18yrs) had low well-being. These young people were more likely to not feel safe or settled in placements, not have a good friend, not like their appearance and lack trusting relationships with carers and social workers

Comparison to other young people



Fewer (65%) young people (11-18yrs) liked school in comparison with young people (73%) in Wales and looked after young people in other Welsh authorities

They talk about it in front of other people who give me weird looks.
11-18yrs



Young people (19%) in Flintshire felt embarrassed by adults drawing attention to their care status more frequently than young people (14%) in other Welsh local authorities.

Although half of young people had high well-being in all areas, more looked after young people (11-18yrs) were dissatisfied with their lives and not as happy or optimistic about their futures as other young people living in Wales.

The survey results suggest about a quarter of the young people need to have targeted interventions that focus on improving relationships (e.g. with carers, social workers and friends).

Gender differences – 11-18 year olds



In comparison with girls, fewer boys reported being able to access the Internet outside school.



More boys found their social workers difficult to get hold of and felt excluded from social work decision-making.



More girls worried about their feelings or behaviours than did boys.



Girls felt their carers were less sensitive to their feelings.

Recommendations

- **Explore why children in Flintshire aged 8-11yrs gave more negative responses** compared to the other age groups and compared to similarly aged children in other local authorities.
- **Make sure that reviews of contact arrangements consider the views of all children.** It is important that reasons for decisions are explained and that children are given the chance to ask questions about contact.
- **When making plans with children and young people, include unstructured opportunities to explore the outdoors** such as walking the dog or playing in a park as well as organised activities.
- **Ensure that all social workers introduce themselves to children and explain their roles in a child-friendly way.** Half of the youngest children (4-7yrs) did not know who their social worker was and some children and young people didn't know they could speak to their social worker in private.
- **Explain to children what has led to them coming into care and provide opportunities for them to ask questions.** Seven of the ten youngest children (4-7yrs) did not understand why they were in care and need help in understanding what has happened and that they are not to blame.
- **Provide opportunities for young people (11-18yrs) to build self-esteem and positive self-image.** 26% of young people were unhappy with the way they looked which is a larger proportion than young people (10%) in the general population.
- **Consider how young people might be reassured about the support they can expect to receive in the future.**

bright spots

This survey was developed by Coram Voice and University of Bristol together with 140 children and young people in and from care as part of the national **Bright Spots Programme**.

It asks children in care about their life, based on the things that are important to them.

To find out more go to:

www.coramvoice.org.uk/brightspots

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