



Your Life, Your Care: *a survey of the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-18yrs in North Somerset*

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About this research

Bright Spots

This research is part of the Bright Spots Programme: a collaboration between Coram Voice & the University of Oxford, funded by the Hadley Trust.

Currently official statistics only provide a partial picture of children in care & care leavers' lives. Data focuses on adult perspectives using objective outcomes measures – e.g. where children live, educational results. None of this information tells us about how children feel: are they happy, safe and feel they are doing well?

The Bright Spots Programme seeks to address these gaps by measuring children's subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is defined as feeling good and doing well at an individual and interpersonal level.

- The Programme helps LAs systematically listen to their children in care and care leavers about the things that are important to them.
- Through the Programme we developed the *Bright Spots Well-Being Indicators*, which put children's experience and voices at the heart of how we measure subjective well-being.
- The indicators are measured by the '*Your Life, Your Care*' survey – a tool grounded in research and comparable to national data sets.
- The survey was developed from literature reviews, roundtable discussions with professionals and from focus groups and individual interviews with 140 looked after children and young people living in nine different local authorities.
- The survey identifies the areas where children appear to be flourishing and where things could be improved, providing an evidence base of children's experience and well-being to inform service improvements.

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Section 1: Summary: Key findings

Your Life, Your Care 2020

The views of children in care aged 4-18 in North Somerset Council (NSC) on their well-being

87

Children in care responded to the survey from a total eligible population of 178: a response rate of

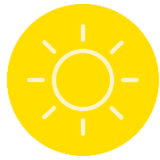
49%

In March-April 2020 all children in care aged 4-18yrs in North Somerset were asked to take part in an online survey to find out how they felt about their lives. This is a summary of the findings.

- There was a good response to the survey especially from the youngest children. All the children in care aged 4-7yrs completed the survey
- There was a slight under-representation of boys, children of ethnic minority and those in residential care.

Age group	Total n (%)
4-7yrs	17 (100%)
8-11yrs (primary)	21 (53%)
11-18yrs (secondary)	49 (41%)

What is working well?



There had been an improvement on the majority of indicators since last year's survey.

Trusting relationships



All the children aged 4-11yrs and 94% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers.

Most children and young people had a trusted adult in their lives: just two did not.

Home environment



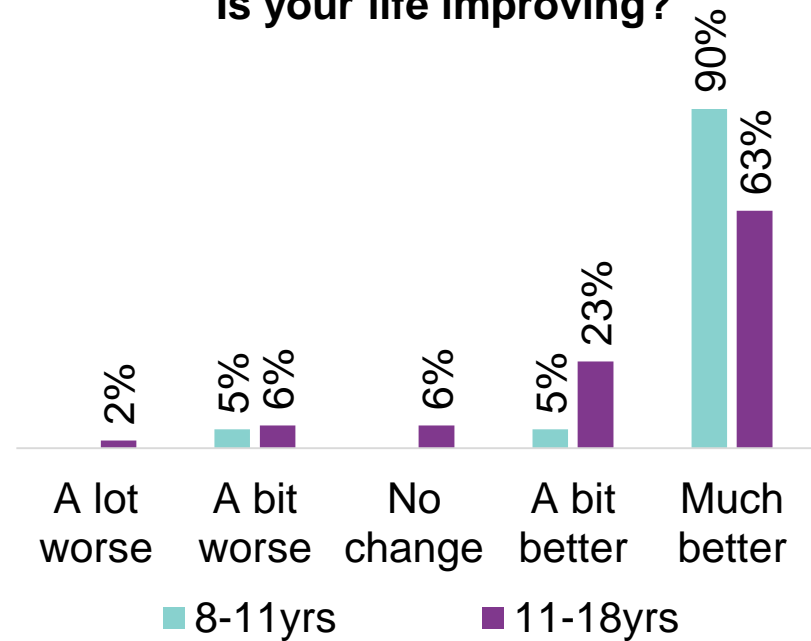
Most felt their carers were interested in their education and helped them learn life skills.



Children and young people in NSC were more likely to live with a pet compared to looked after children in other LAs.

*I really like all the toys I have at my carer's house.
4-7yrs*

Is your life improving?



What is working well?

Social workers



The proportion of young people who had kept the same social worker during the year has increased significantly since last year: up from 30% to 55%.

It was also better than the average response in other LAs where 34% had one worker in the year.



Most children and young people in NSC trusted their social worker.

*In the past I didn't
[feel included in
decision-making]
but I do now.
11-18yrs*

Understanding why you are in care



Children, especially the 4-7yrs group felt they had been helped to understand why they were in care.

What could be improved?

Feeling different



Staff wearing ID badges when out with young people was still an issue but the numbers complaining had reduced to just 3 young people.

People wear ID badges whilst I'm having contact.

11-18yrs

Family time



Many children and young people wanted more contact with siblings.

I would like to see my baby sister.
8-11yrs

Sharing confidences



Although most young people reported having a trusting relationship with their carers, 36% did not talk regularly with their carers about things that mattered to them. One child (8-11yrs) wrote:

I would like to get a better relationship with my carer so I feel safer where I live. I would like someone who can understand my thoughts and feelings. I would prefer to live closer to my school, my friends and my family because I feel safer.

What could be improved?

Having a good friend



One child and three young people did not have a good friend.

I would like another person around my age to play with.
8-11yrs

School



67% of young people (11-18yrs) liked school 'a lot' or 'a bit' – a smaller proportion compared to 80% of peers in the general population who like school.



2 children (8-11yrs) and 8 young people (11-18yrs) in NSC were afraid to go to school because of bullying. **Reports of bullying had decreased since last year.**

Well-being

High well-being



The majority of children and young people gave responses that suggested they had moderate to high well-being. About 40% of young people (11-18yrs) had very high well-being: a larger proportion compared to looked after young people in other LAs.

Low well-being



Age 4-7yrs Two children felt 'sad'. One child felt unsettled in foster care and disliked his bedroom. The other child did not give negative responses but skipped the questions on liking school and whether their carers noticed how they were feeling.

Age 8-11yrs One child described themselves as 'sad'. The child gave mainly positive responses to the questions but felt he was seeing his mother, father and siblings too much.

Age 11-18yrs 5 (11%) young people gave responses that suggested low well-being: 2 girls and 3 boys. Young people with low well-being also tended to report that they:

- Worried about their feelings
- Disliked their appearance
- Didn't talk to carers regularly about things that mattered to them.



Section 2: Methodology

Methodology

- Three online surveys were used to capture looked after children and young people's views on their own well-being. The three versions were for:
 - a) children aged 4-7yrs (16 questions);
 - b) children aged 8-11yrs in primary school (31 questions); and
 - c) young people of secondary school age 11-18yrs (46 questions).
- There was a common set of 16 core questions.
- Paper surveys were also available and used in cases where no Internet was available, or when the young person preferred this method.
- In North Somerset at the time of the survey 178 children and young people aged 4-18yrs were looked after and able to complete the survey.
- Children and young people completed the survey anonymously: individual identifiers such as name, school etc. were not collected in order to allow responses without fear of consequences.
- If children recorded names or any identifying information on the survey these were removed by the researchers.

Methodology (2)

- The survey was distributed to head teachers and designated teachers in schools.
- Children and young people were asked to complete the online survey in school in March 2020, generally with a trusted adult present.
- When schools closed due to Coronavirus, family support workers, participation workers and young people's support workers called children and young people either by phone or Zoom and supported them to complete the survey.
- They took a team approach and were careful to not directly support any children or young people to complete the survey who they were working with directly.
- Social care staff, including foster carers, Independent Reviewing Officers and social workers, were asked to encourage children and young people to complete the survey.
- Fostering social workers were asked to support children and young people to complete the survey during home visits.
- Regular reminders were sent to head teachers and designated teachers and social care staff.
- The survey was promoted in training sessions for designated teachers and at all staff briefings for social care staff.

Methodology (3)

Subjective well-being:

Are children flourishing?

- Subjective well-being in this survey refers to children's own evaluations of how they feel about their lives.
- There are questions in the surveys about affect (e.g. how happy a child feels now), cognitive judgements (e.g. evaluations of relationships) and the inner world (e.g. life having meaning).
- All these elements help us understand if children are flourishing.

- Where possible, local authority (LA) data are compared to data on children in the general population, and to the average responses from 17 local authorities.
- Data were weighted and tests run for significant difference between LAs.
- In addition to questions that measure overarching well-being indicators (happiness, life satisfaction etc.) the questions cover four domains that are important to children and young people: Relationships, Resilience, Rights and Recovery. The report covers each of these.



bright spots

On some pages of this report you will see a **'Bright Spots'** icon (shown left). This indicates a 'good news' story – a positive aspect of practice in your local authority. This is where children and young people are doing significantly better than children in care in other local authorities or report the same or higher well-being than their peers in the general population.



Section 3: Survey results



3.1 Demographics

- Sample sizes
- Age and gender
- Ethnicity
- Placements
- Length of time in care

Sample sizes

Although the sample size must be borne in mind when considering the representativeness of the data, the response rate was significantly better than in some similar surveys. *The State of Nation: Children in Care 2015*, for example, had a response rate of 3%.

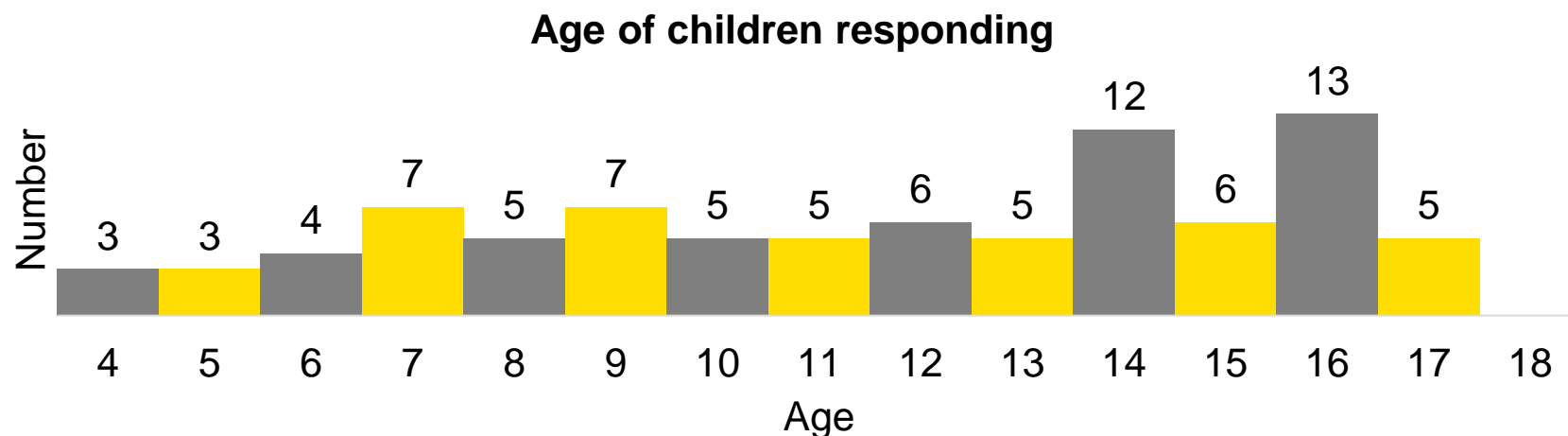
- 87 children and young people responded to the surveys from an eligible looked after population of 178.
- The overall response rate was 49%. All the looked after children aged 4-7yrs completed the survey – a 100% response rate.

Age range	Care population <i>n</i>	Responses <i>n</i>	Response rate %
4-7yrs	17	17	(100%)
8-11yrs	40	21	(53%)
11-18yrs	121	49	(40%)

Age and gender

- In NSC, 54% of the looked after population were boys. (DfE, 2019). Boys were slightly under-represented in the survey responses.

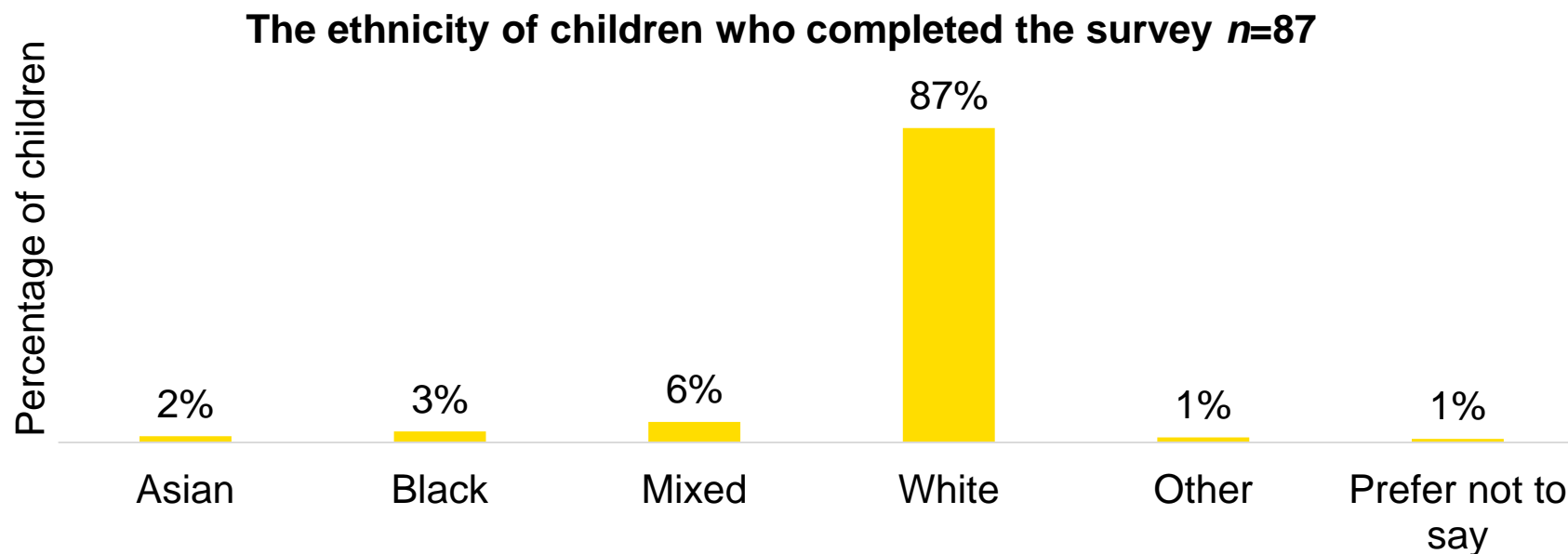
Age group	Girls <i>n</i> (%)	Boys <i>n</i> (%)	Prefer not to say/ no reply <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	6 (37%)	10 (62%)	1 (1%)
8-11yrs	13 (62%)	7 (33%)	1 (5%)
11-18yrs	22 (45%)	25 (51%)	2 (4%)
TOTAL	41 (47%)	42 (48%)	4 (5%)



Ethnicity

Children of Asian, black, mixed and other ethnicities appear slightly under-represented in the survey, as they make up 16% of the care population in NSC's statistical return to the DfE (2019) compared to 12% in our sample.

- The majority (87%) of children and young people who completed the survey were of white ethnicity
- One child aged 8-11yrs wrote that they did not know their ethnicity.



Placements

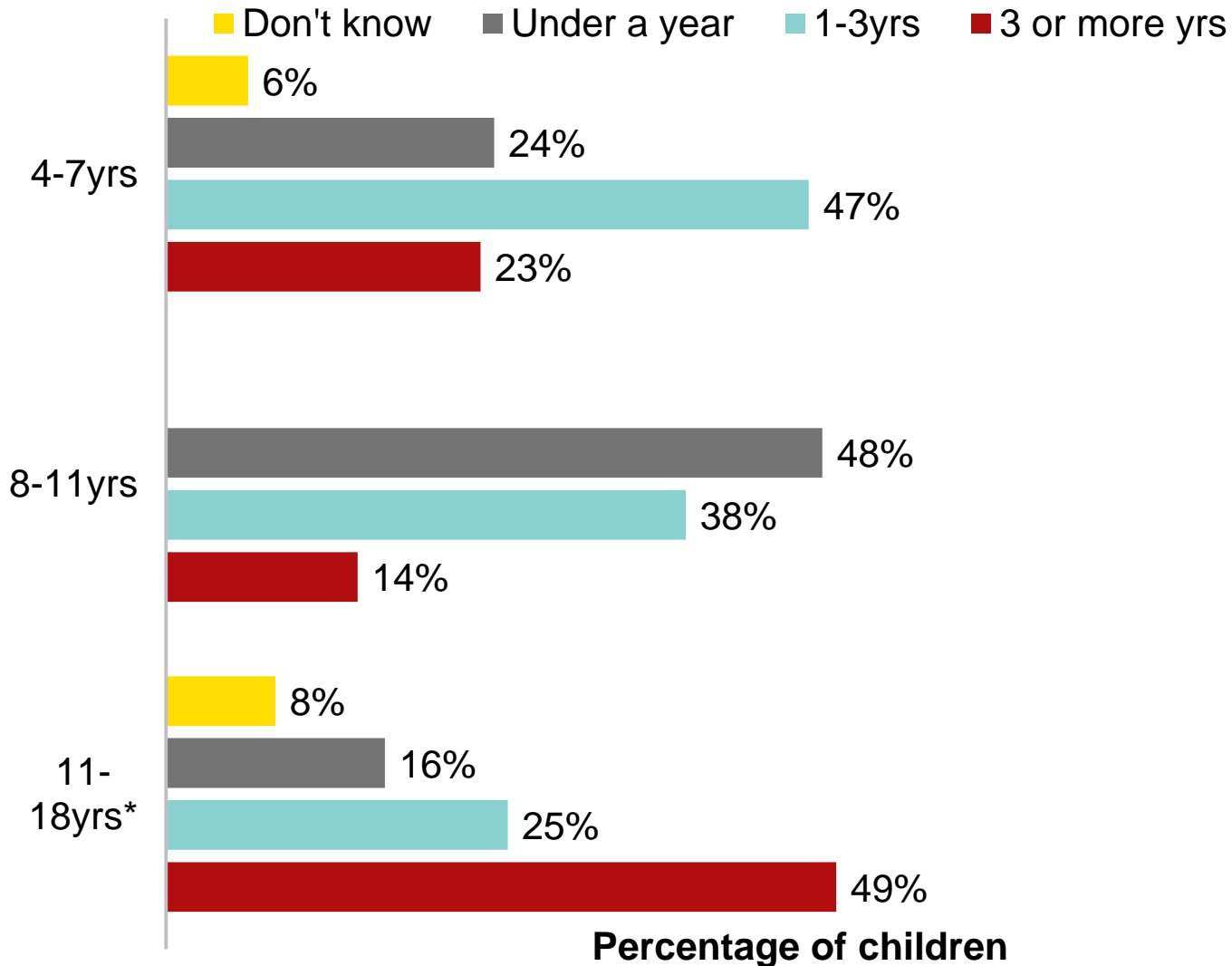
Responses broadly mirror the pattern in the local authority where 74% are placed in foster care. There was an under-representation of residential care: 3% in the sample compared to 12% in the published statistics. (DfE, 2019)

- The majority (84%) of children and young people were living in foster care.

Age group	Foster care %	Family or friends care %	Residential care %	With parents %	Somewhere else %	Prefer not to say %
4-7yrs	100%					
8-11yrs	94%	4%				2%
11-18yrs	78%	10%	6%		4%	2%
TOTAL	84%	7%	3%		2%	4%

Length of time in care

How long have you been in care?



*Graph does not include the answer option 'prefer not to say', hence 11-18yrs doesn't add to 100%



3.2 Relationships

- Family time
- Good friends
- Pets
- Adults you live with:
Continuity and trust
- Social worker:
Continuity and trust

Family time




The youngest children (4-7yrs) were not asked questions about family contact, as it was thought that they might become distressed or anxious.



Children and young people (8-18yrs) were asked if they were *content with the frequency of contact that was taking place with their mother, father, and siblings.*

- All the children aged 8-11yrs had contact with at least one parent .
- 15 (32% of young people (11-18yrs) had no face to face contact with either parent.
- Children(8-11yrs) were more satisfied with parental contact than young people (11-18yrs).
- Just more than a third of those aged 8-18yrs wanted more contact with siblings.

Family time (2)

Family member	Age group	Too much	Just right	Too little	I cannot see them	Parent passed away	Don't have any siblings
Mother 	8-11yrs* n=19	1 (5%)	11 (58%)	4 (21%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	-----
	11-18yrs* n=46	1 (2%)	18 (39%)	8 (17%)	14 (30%)	5 (11%)	-----
Father 	8-11yrs* n=19	1 (5%)	9 (47%)	1 (5%)	7 (37%)	1 (5%)	-----
	11-18yrs n=47	2 (4%)	11 (23%)	4 (9%)	25 (53%)	5 (11%)	-----
Siblings 	8-11yrs n=21	3 (14%)	9 (43%)	8 (38%)	1 (5%)	-----	
	11-18yrs n=47	2 (4%)	20 (43%)	18 (38%)	6 (13%)	-----	1 (2%)

*Adds to 99% due to rounding of percentages

Family time: 8-11yrs (comments)

Children and young people were also asked to say *what they thought about family time*.

- 5 children wrote down their thoughts and feelings about family time. Quotes are shown below.

I have just the right amount of contact with my birth family.

I want to see more of mummy and brother and nanny.

I see them enough.

In the future I might want to see my family a little bit more.

I would like to see my baby sister.

Family time: 11-18yrs (comments)

- 19 young people wrote down their thoughts and feelings about family time. Example quotes are shown below. Nine wanted more contact with siblings, and 2 did not want contact with their parents.

I don't see my brother that much and would like to see him more.

I think that I should be allowed to see my dad.

I'd like to see my mum and nan and grandad. My Social worker is working with me and my fosters carer towards this.

You'd like more arranged contact as it's expensive to travel to and from counties. I'd like a travel warrant for contact time.

I don't want to see mum. I can't see my siblings because they are too far away. I would like to see one of my siblings ... I know exactly where he is but I can't go and see him. It's sad.

I would like to see more of my older sisters, in particular one of them. This is ongoing but you don't feel that it's being addressed this is discussed at every contact with SW.

Good friends



A lack of friendships is associated with loneliness and anxiety. All children and young people were asked if they *had a really good friend*.

General population: *The Millennium Cohort Study (2015)* of young people aged 14yrs found that 3% of young people did not have a good friend.

- Most of the children and young people stated that they had at least one good friend but 4 (5%) did not.
- One child (4-7yrs), one aged 8-11yrs and another aged 11-18yrs skipped the question.
- There was a slightly larger proportion without a good friend compared to peers in the general population.

Age group	Yes, I have a really good friend n (%)	No, I don't have a really good friend n (%)
4-7yrs	16 (100%)	
8-11yrs	19 (95%)	1 (5%)
11-18yrs	45 (94%)	3 (6%)
TOTAL	80 (95%)	4 (5%)

Pets



Pets were important to children in all the focus groups we ran.

Children and young people said that pets are non-judgmental – they love you no matter what and are always pleased to see you. They can also give children an opportunity to take responsibility. Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked if they *had a pet in the home they lived in.*

- 86% of the 8-11yrs children lived in a household with a pet compared to 72% of children in other LAs
- In the older (11-18yrs group), 36 (74%) of young people had a pet where they lived compared to 59% of young people in other LAs
- Giving children and young people the opportunity to live with a pet is a Bright Spot of practice.

Adults you live with: Continuity & trust

Placement moves



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked: *How many placements have you had?*

Number of placements	Percentage
1 placement	25%
2-4 placements	55%
5-7 placements	4%
8-10 placements	4%
11+	4%
Don't know	8%

Trust



Children and young people were asked if they *trusted the adults they lived with (i.e. carers or parents).*

- 100% of the youngest children (4-7yrs);
- 100% of children aged 8-11yrs; and
- 94% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers.
- Relationships with carers are very good and it is a Bright Spot of practice.

Social worker: Continuity & trust

bright spots

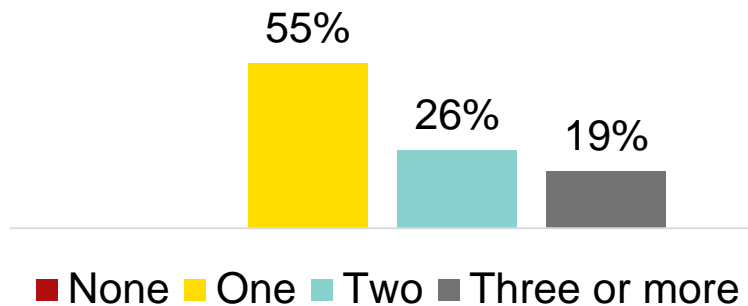
Changes in social workers



11-18 year olds were asked:
How many social workers have you had in the past 12 months?

- 19% answered that they had had three or more social workers in the previous year.

How many social workers have you had in the last 12 months?



Trusting social worker





























Children & young people ($n=79$) who knew who their social worker was were asked if they *trusted their social worker*.

The level of trust in social workers was high.

- 94% of the youngest children (4-7yrs);
- 100% of children aged 8-11yrs; and
- 95% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their social worker.

- The proportion of young people with one social worker during the year has increased significantly since last year. There is also a larger proportion of young people with one social worker in NSC compared to the average in other LAs where 34% had one worker in a year. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Changes since last survey

	4-7yrs	8-11yrs	11-18yrs
 Contact with mother just right		58%  -1%	39%  +10%
 Contact with father just right		48%  -4%	23%  -1%
 Contact with siblings just right		43%  -15%	41%  +7%
 Have a good friend	100%  +7%	95%  +13%	94%  +2%
 Have a pet		80%  -3%	74%  +8%
 Trust the adults they live with	100%  0%	100%  0%	94%  -2%
 Trust social worker	94%  +1%	100%  +5%	95%  +11%
 1 social worker in last 12 months			55%  +25%



3.3 Resilience

- Trusted adult
- Being trusted & helping out
- Liking school
- Adults you live with:
Support for learning
- Having fun & hobbies
- Access to nature
- Second chances
- Life skills
- Access to Internet at home

Trusted adult

Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked: *Do you have an adult who you trust, who helps you and sticks by you no matter what?*



The availability of one key adult has been shown to be the turning point in many looked after young people's lives. (Gilligan, 2009)

Having a trusted adult has been shown to be the main factor in helping children recover from traumatic events.

- Most children and young people wrote that they had a trusted adult in their lives:
 - 100% of children (8-11yrs) although 2 skipped the question and
 - 96% of the 11-18yrs young people.
- 2 young people had no such adult in their lives.

Being trusted & helping out

Younger children (8-11yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to help the teacher*. Children had said in the focus groups that they were never trusted to show visitors around school or deliver a message because they were looked after.

- 6 children (8-11yrs) responded that 'all or most of the time' they were asked to help and 10 answered 'sometimes'.
- 4 (20%) wrote 'hardly ever'



We asked young people: *How often do you get the chance to show you can be trusted?*

Having trusting relationships and being trusted were key issues raised by the children in the focus groups that underpinned the development of this survey.

- 60% of young people (11-18yrs) thought they were given opportunities 'all or most of the time' to show they could be trusted and 37% given them 'sometimes'.
- One young person (2%) responded 'hardly ever'

Liking school/college



All the children and young people were asked how much they *liked school or college*.

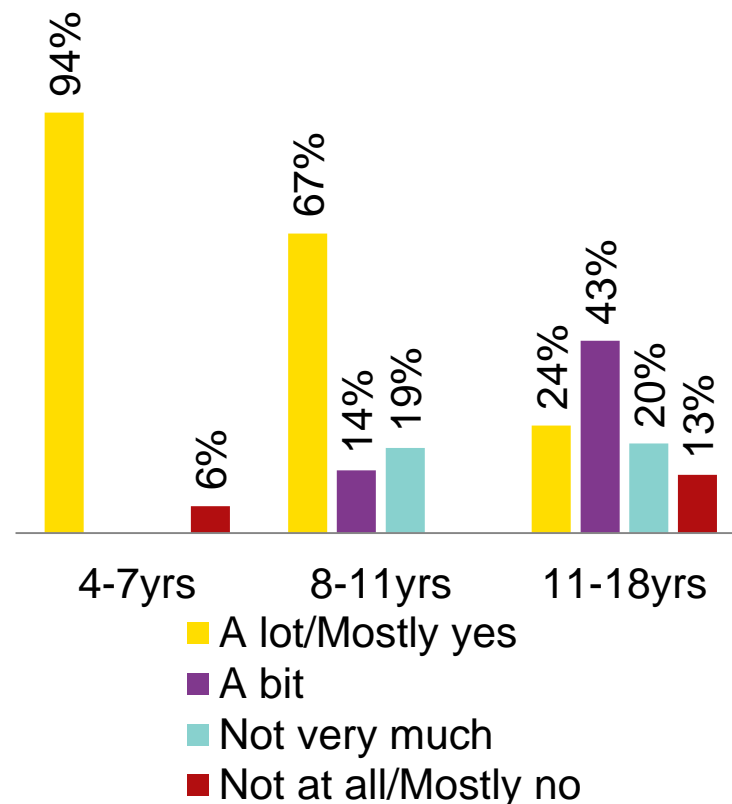
General population: Liking school

The *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (2015) of 5,335 young people (11-15yrs) reported that 80% liked school 'a lot' or 'a bit' and 20% 'not very much' or 'not at all'. Liking school decreased with the child's age and girls were more likely to say they enjoyed school 'a lot' in comparison with boys.

- 67% of the 11-18yrs group liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit', which is a smaller proportion than in the general population.

- A smaller proportion of young people liked school a lot/a bit compared to looked after young people in other LAs where on average 78% liked school.

Do you like school/ college?



Adults you live with: Support for learning



Children in the 8-11yrs and 11-18yrs surveys were asked if the adults they lived with (e.g. carers, parents)

showed an interest in what they were doing in school or college.

General population: Support with learning

In comparison the *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (11-15yrs) reported that 90% of children in England said their parents were interested in what happened at school.

- 90% of 8-11yrs and 92% of 11-18yrs recorded that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' – a higher proportion than their peers in the general population. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Having fun & hobbies

Children aged 4-11yrs were asked if they had *fun at the weekend*.



The 11-18yrs survey asked young people if they were able to *spend time on their own hobbies or activities outside of school*.

- The majority of children and young people had fun and took part in hobbies or activities outside of school.

Age group	Yes, I have fun/ take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>	Sometimes I have fun/ take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>	No, I don't have fun or take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>
4-7yrs	17 (100%)	-	-
8-11yrs	16 (76%)	4 (19%)	1 (5%)
11-18yrs	34 (72%)	9 (19%)	4 (9%)
TOTAL	67 (80%)	13 (15%)	5 (5%)

Access to nature



Contact with nature can reduce stress and improve mental health. (Play England, 2012)

Some of the children in our focus groups said safeguarding fears limited their opportunities.

We asked *how often in the last week* children and young people (8-18yrs) had opportunities to *explore the outdoors*, such as visiting parks, beaches, fields and forests. Answer options were *'every day'*, *'more than once this week'*, *'once this week'* and *'not at all'*.

General population:

70% of children (6-15yrs) had visited the natural environment at least once a week in the last year. (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey, 2016)

- 95% of children (8-11yrs) and 89% of young people (11-18yrs) answered that they had spent time outdoors at least once this week.

Life skills



We asked the young people in the 11-18yrs group

How often do you get to practise life skills like cooking healthy food, washing clothes or going to the bank?

This question was asked as many young people in the focus groups thought that they had been insufficiently prepared for independence.

- 96% of young people answered that they were taught independence skills 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. Just two young people reported this was 'hardly ever' or 'never' true.

Access to the Internet where you live



























Young people 11-18yrs were asked *if they could connect to the Internet from home.*

General population: Access to the Internet

- In the UK, 100% of households with children have an Internet connection. (ONS, 2017)
- The *Millennium Cohort Study* of children aged 11yrs old found that children who never used the Internet outside school had a high probability of low well-being. (The Children's Society, 2014)

- The *majority* (96%) of young people reported that they had access to the Internet where they lived.
- 2 (4%) young people did not have access.

Changes since last survey

	4-7yrs	8-11yrs	11-18yrs
 Have a trusted adult		100%  0%	96%  +2%
 Asked to help at school / chance to be trusted		80%  -10%	97%  +1%
 Like school	94%  +7%	81%  -7%	67%  -11%
 Adults interested in education		90%  -10%	92%  -6%
 Have fun / Do own hobbies & activities	100%  0%	95%  -2%	91%  -4%
 Access to nature (parks, beaches, woods)		95%  0%	89%  0%
 Practise life skills			96%  +8%
 Access to Internet at home			96%  +2%



3.4 Rights

- Included in decision-making
- Stigma of being in care
- Feeling safe in placement
- Bullying
- Knowing identity of social workers
- Contact with social workers

Included in decision-making



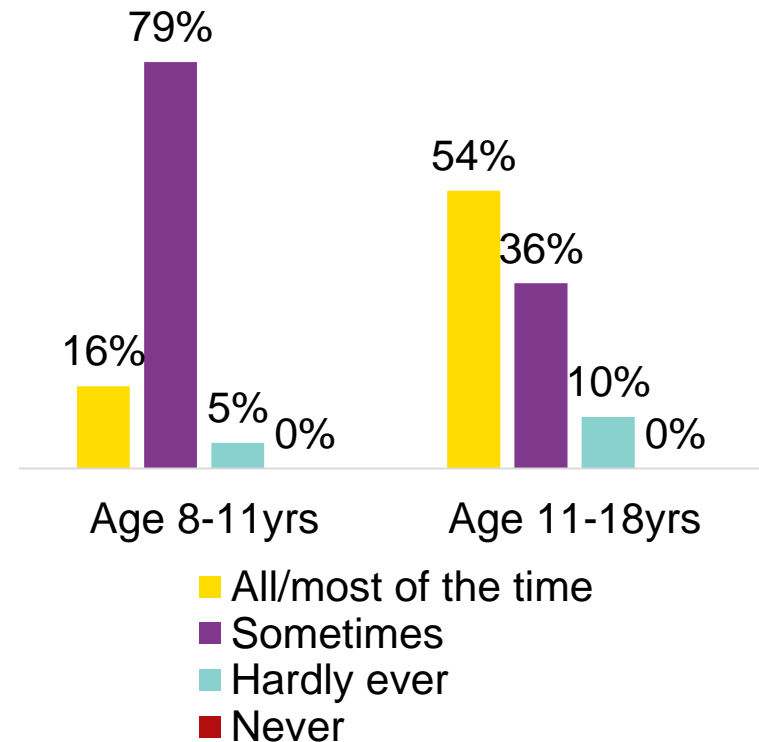
Children aged 8-18yrs were asked, *Do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?*

- 90% of 11-18yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.
- 95% of 8-11yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included. This age group felt included more than the average response in other LAs where 84% felt included. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

*Don't say
you're listening
when you're
not.
11-18yrs*

*In the past I
didn't but I do
now.
11-18yrs*

Do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?



Stigma of being in care



The 11-18yrs age group were asked a question in the survey about feeling different *Do adults do things that make you feel embarrassed about being in care?*

Younger children were not asked these questions, as the focus groups suggested that being made to feel different was of much greater concern in adolescence.

- 3 (6%) of young people recorded that adults did things that made them feel embarrassed about being in care.
- Two young people left comments and they are below.

Wear their badge if they work with North Somerset.
11-18yrs

If people wear ID badges whilst I'm having contact.
11-18yrs

Feeling safe in placement

bright spots



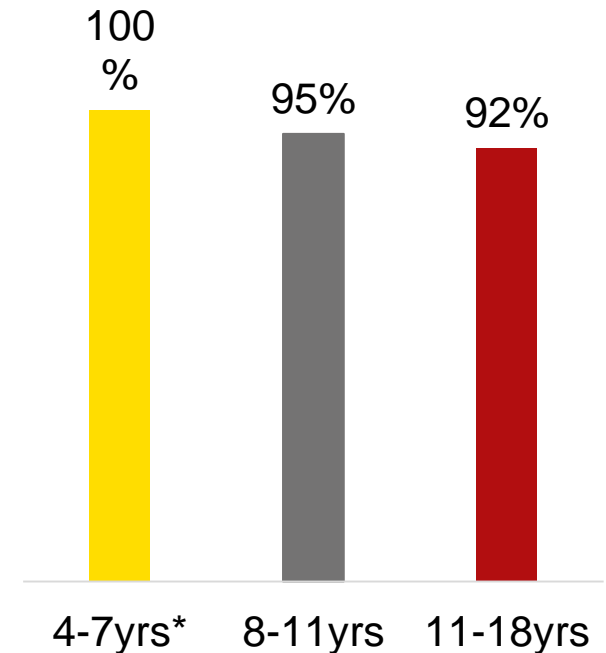
All children were asked if they *felt safe in the home they lived in now*. It is difficult to know what children were thinking about when answering, but feeling secure is about how the world *feels*, not necessarily how it is.

- Overall, 94% of children and young people reported that they 'always' felt safe in their placements: a larger proportion compared to those in the general population and a Bright Spot of practice.
- None of the 4-7yrs group answered 'no, not always'.
- One child in the 8-11yrs group and 4 of those aged 11-18yrs ticked the 'sometimes', 'hardly ever' or 'never' boxes.

General population:

The Children's Worlds survey found that 75% of children (8-13yrs) in the general population felt 'Totally safe' at home. (Rees *et al.*, 2014) Not feeling safe is associated with raised cortisol levels and difficulty in learning and concentration. (Harvard University, 2012)

I always feel safe in the home I live in



* Percentage of 4-7year olds answering 'Yes, always' (4-7 year olds had 'yes, always' and 'no, not always' as response options whereas the older age groups could indicate whether they 'always', 'sometimes', 'hardly ever' or 'never' felt safe).

Bullying

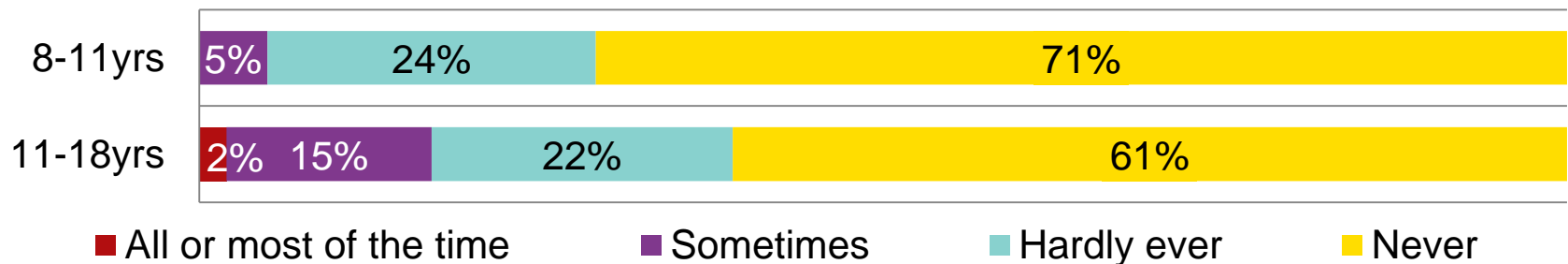
Our question asked if *children felt afraid of going to school because of bullying* and if they were afraid were they *getting support from an adult*.

General population: Bullying

- The analysis of the *Children's Worlds surveys* in 22 countries has shown that being free from bullying is one of the most important factors in children's well-being. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)
- About 88% of children in England say they are not bullied at school. (ONS, 2016b)

- Very few children and young people felt afraid to go to school because of bullying.
- 2 children aged 8-11yrs 'sometimes' felt afraid. Both felt they were being supported to stop the bullying.
- 8 young people were afraid of bullying. Six of the eight felt supported.

Do you ever feel afraid of going to school or college because of bullying?



Knowing identity of social workers



All the children and young people were asked if they *knew who their current social worker was*.

- Overall 7% did not know who their social worker was.

Age group	Know social worker <i>n</i> (%)	Don't know social worker <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	15 (94%)	1 (6%)
8-11yrs	21 (100%)	
11-18yrs	43 (90%)	5 (10%)
TOTAL	79 (93%)	6 (7%)

Contact with social workers



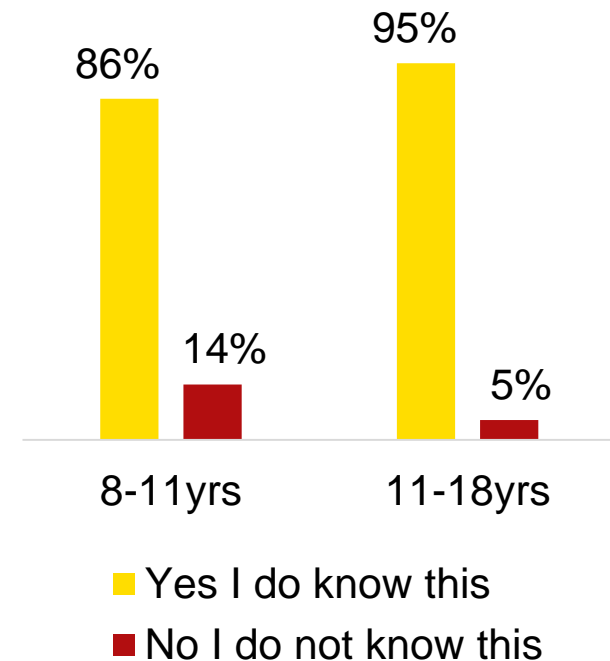
Young people aged 11-18yrs ($n=43$) who knew who their social worker was were asked *how easy it was to contact them*.



Children and young people (8-18yrs) were also asked if *they knew they could speak to their social worker on their own*.

- A high proportion (83%) of young people (11-18yrs) reported that they could get easily get in touch with their social worker 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. However, 7 (17%) could only 'hardly ever' or 'never' get in touch with their social worker.
- The majority of children (8-11yrs) and almost all of those aged over 11yrs knew they could ask to speak to their social worker on their own.

Do you know you have the right to speak to a social worker on your own?



Changes since last survey

4-7yrs

8-11yrs

11-18yrs



Included in decision making

95%

+5%

90%

+10%



Embarrassed by adults about being in care

0%

6%

-2%



Always feel safe where they live

100% 0%

95%

+13%

92%

+8%



Afraid to go to school because of bullying

5%

-33%

17%

-1%



Know their social worker

94% +6%

100% +7%

90%

+2%



Easy to contact social worker

83%

+4%



Know they can speak to social worker alone

86%

+7%

95%

-1%



3.5 Recovery

- Knowing reason for being in care
- Feeling settled in placement
- Liking bedrooms
- Adults you live with:
Sensitive parenting
- Adults you live with:
Sharing confidences
- Support with worries
- Parity with peers
- Happiness with appearance

Knowing reason for being in care

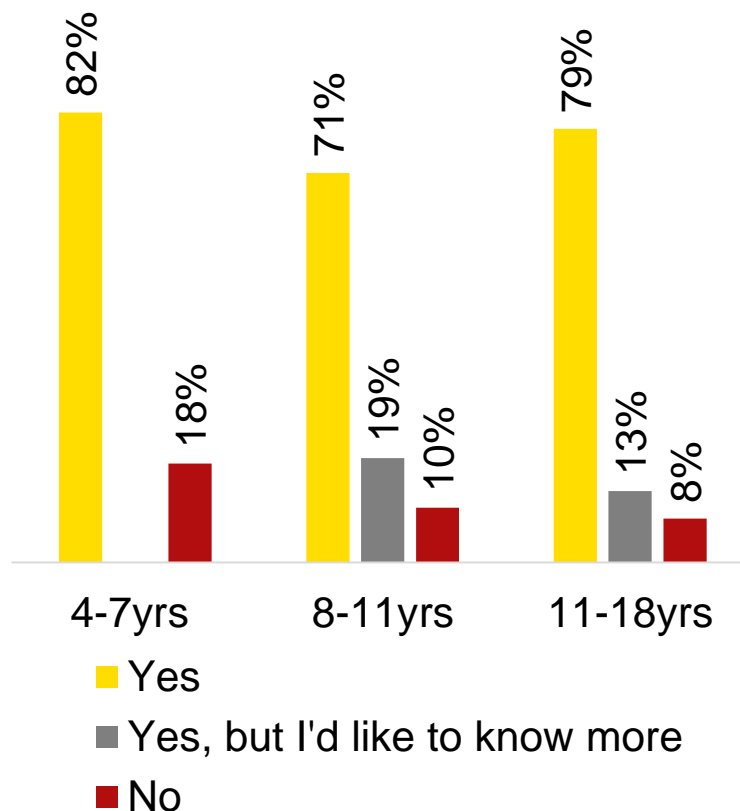
Having a coherent account of one's history and understanding the reasons that led to becoming looked after are important in the development of an integrated identity and in recovery from abuse and neglect.

(Adshead, 2012; Adler, 2012)



All the children and young people were asked if *an adult had explained why they were in care.*

Has an adult explained why you are in care?



- Three of the youngest children (4-7yrs), 6 children (8-11yrs) and 10 young people (11-18yrs) wanted to have a better understanding of why they were in care.

- A larger proportion of 4-7yrs felt an adult had explained why they were in care compared to children in other LAs. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Feeling settled in placement



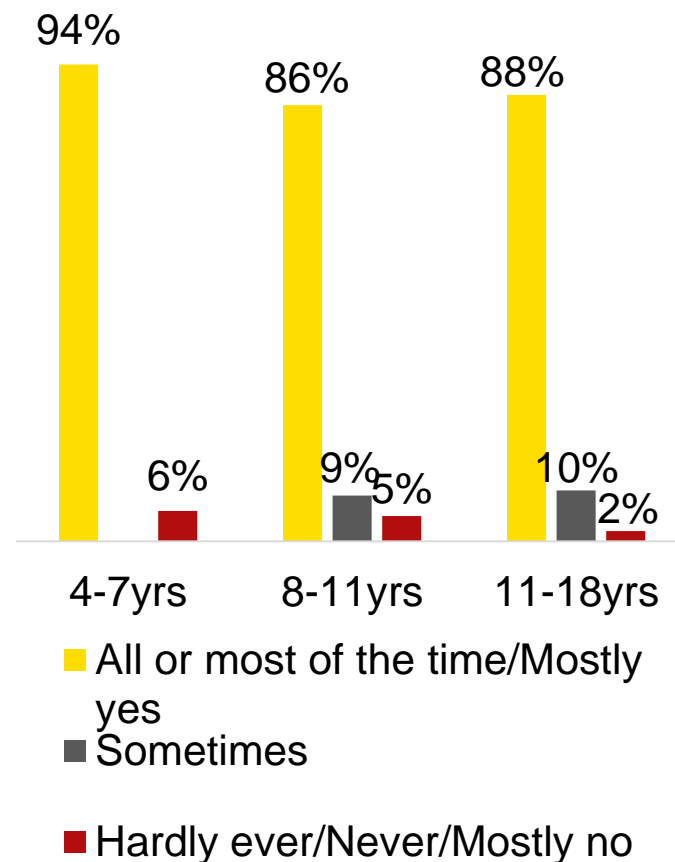
We wanted to know if children felt a sense of belonging and felt at ease in their placements. Based on the advice from our focus groups, children and young people were asked:

*Do you feel settled in the home you live in now?
(Do you feel comfortable, accepted and at ease?)*

The youngest children (4-7yrs) could answer 'mostly yes' or 'mostly no'. Children and young people (8-18yrs) could answer: 'all or most of the time', 'sometimes', 'hardly ever', or 'never'.

- The majority of children and young people felt settled in their placements.

Feeling settled



Liking bedrooms

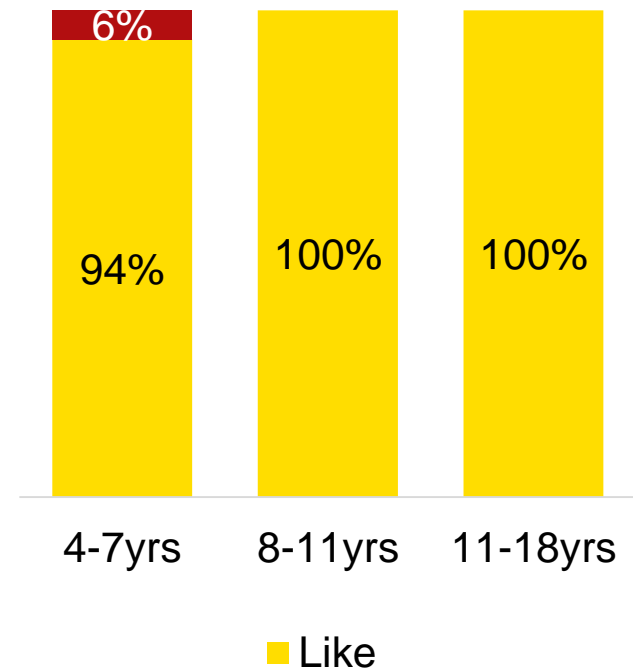


Liking your bedroom was an important feature for the focus groups we ran.

Young people reflected that their bedrooms were a place for being on your own in busy homes. It is linked to safety, sense of identity and feeling a sense of belonging.

- The majority of children and young people liked their bedrooms.
- Two children aged 4-7yrs did not like their bedrooms

Do you like your bedroom?



Adults you live with: Sensitive parenting



All children were asked if the adults they lived with *noticed how they were feeling.*

- 100% of children (4-7yrs), 90% of children (8-11yrs) and 98% of young people (11-18yrs) thought their carers noticed how they were feeling 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.

Adults you live with: Sharing confidences



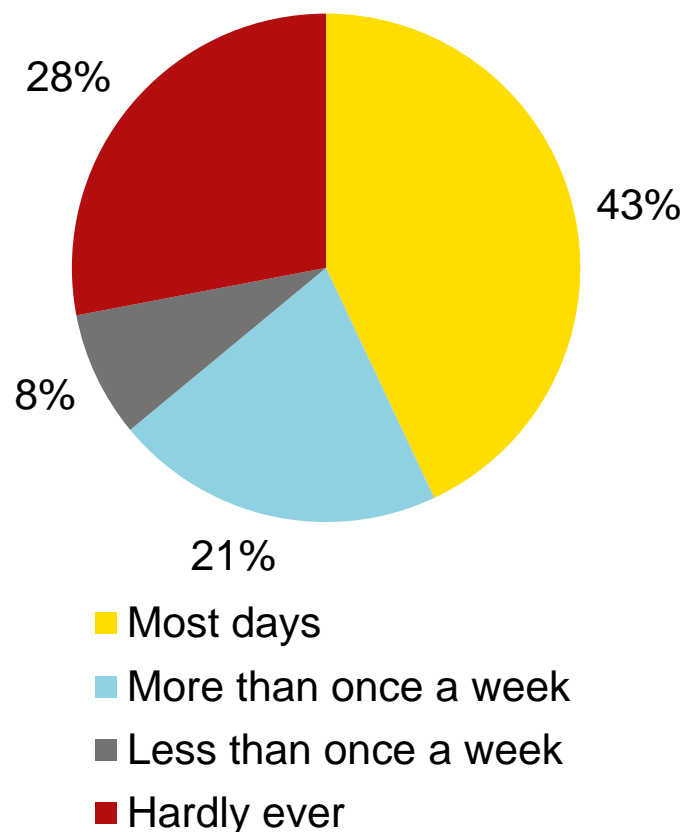
Young people (11-18yrs) were asked how often they *talked to the adults that they lived with about the things that mattered to them.*

General population

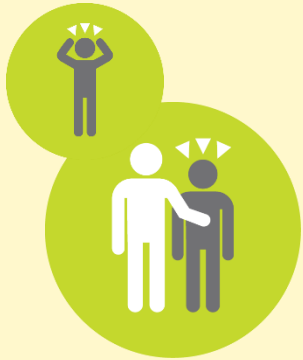
The *Understanding Society* survey (2017) found that 66% of children (10-15yrs) talked regularly to a parent.

- 64% of young people talked regularly with their carers/parents about things that mattered to them.
- A slightly smaller compared to their peers in the general population.

Speaking to adults about things that matter to you



Support with worries



Children and young people (8-11yrs and 11-18yrs) were asked if they *worried about their own feelings or behaviour* and, if they *did have concerns, were they receiving support*.

General population & other comparative data: Mental health

- In England, 39% of looked after children aged 5-16yrs have concerning SDQ scores. (DfE, 2019)
- Studies of looked after populations show that children's level of difficulties are much higher, ranging from about 45% of children in foster care to 75% of those in residential. (Ford *et al.*, 2007)
- In the general population, 13.5% of children have SDQ scores that suggest they have a clinical level of mental health difficulties. (ONS, 2016b)

- 2 children (8-11yrs) worried 'all or most of the time' about their feelings and behaviour and 6 'sometimes'.
- 100% of children who reported worrying thought they were getting help from an adult to cope with their worries.
- 4 young people (11-18yrs) worried all or most of the time' and 19 'sometimes'.
- 18/23 young people who reported worrying thought they were getting help.

Parity with peers



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to do similar things to their friends.*

- 83% of young people reported that 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' they did similar things to their friends.
- 8 (17%) young people reported that they could 'hardly ever' or 'never' do similar things to their friends.

Happiness with appearance



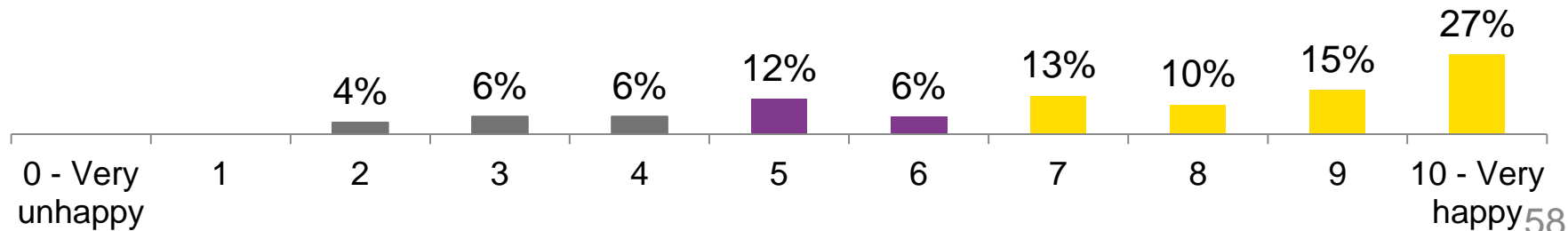
Studies have shown that poor body image is associated with low self-esteem, depression and self-harm. (Cash and Smolek, 2011)

- The majority of young people were happy with their appearance.

General population: Happiness with appearance










- 10% of 10-17 year olds in the general population are unhappy with their appearance. Girls are more likely to have a lower opinion of their appearance than boys. (The Children's Society, 2019)

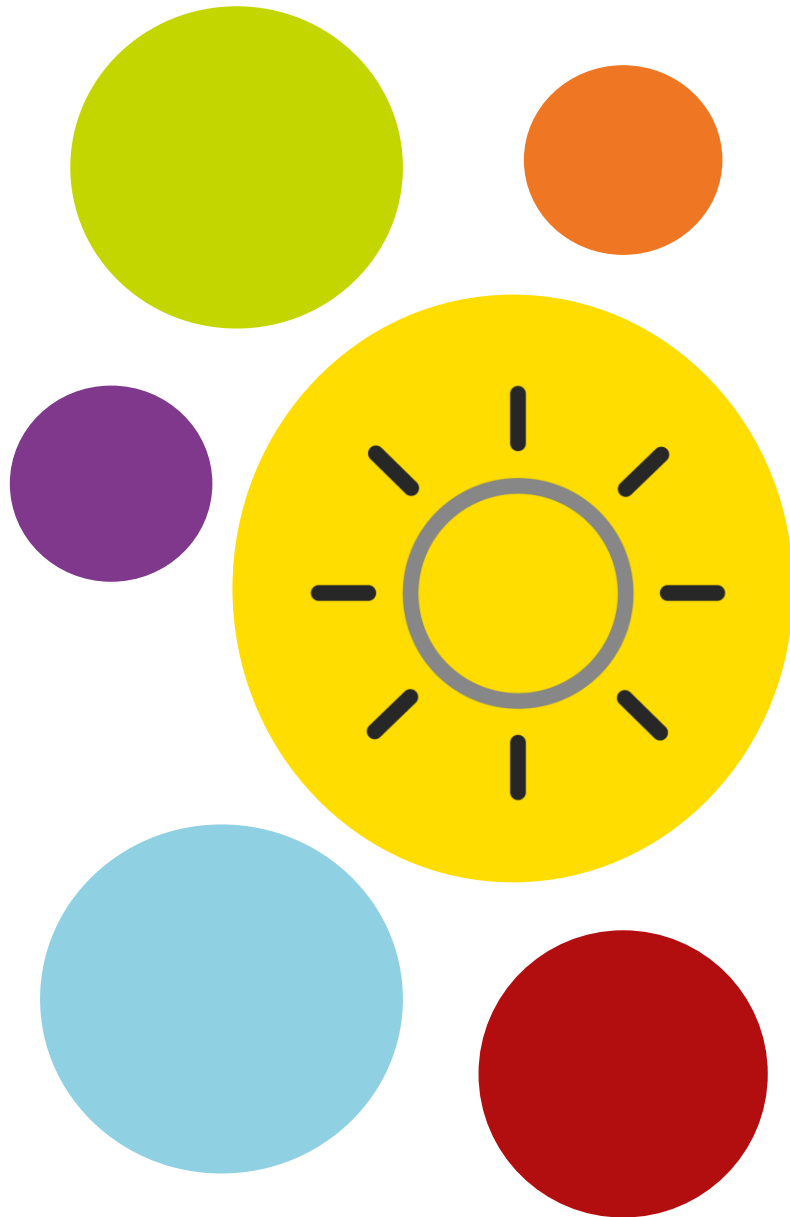
How happy are you with the way you look?*



*Adds to 99% due to rounding of percentages

Changes since last survey

	4-7yrs		8-11yrs		11-18yrs	
 Reason for care fully explained	82%	▲ +32%	71%	▲ +8%	79%	▬ +3%
 Feel settled where they live	94%	▼ -6%	86%	▼ -14%	88%	▬ 0%
 Like their bedrooms	94%	▼ -6%	100%	▬ 0%	100%	▬ +4%
 Adults they live with notice feelings	100%	▲ +13%	90%	▬ -5%	98%	▲ +8%
 Talk to adults they live with about things that matter					64%	▬ 0%
 Worry about feelings/behaviour			38%	▼ -20%	48%	▼ 15%
 Supported with worries			100%	▲ +6%	78%	▬ 0%
 Same opportunities as friends					83%	▬ +1%
 Happy with appearance					84%	▬ %



3.6 Well-being

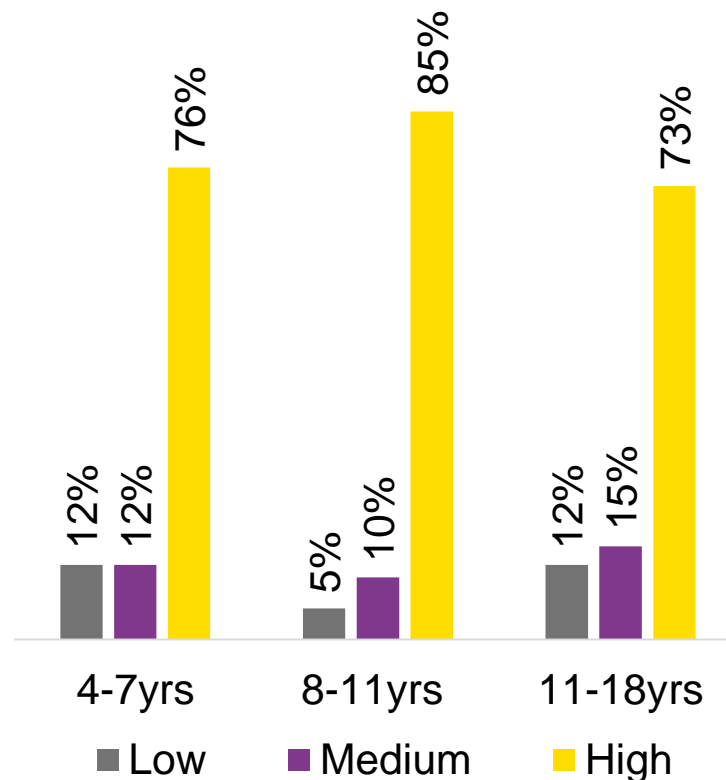
- Happiness yesterday – affect
- Life satisfaction – overall evaluation
- Are the things you do worthwhile? – psychological/eudemonic well-being
- Positivity about the future
- Comparisons – other LAs and general population
- Life is improving
- Gender differences: 11-18yrs
- Low well-being

Happiness yesterday

A decrease in happiness with age occurs in all surveys. Well-being decreases from school year 5 onwards with age 14-15yrs being the lowest point. It then starts to rise again. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)

- Children (4-7yrs & 8-11yrs) were asked to rate *how happy they were yesterday* on a five-point scale, from 'very unhappy' to 'very happy'.
- Young people (11-18yrs) selected a point on a 0-10 scale with 0 being '*not at all happy*' and 10 '*completely happy*'.
- The majority of children and young people had felt happy the previous day.

Happiness yesterday



Life satisfaction

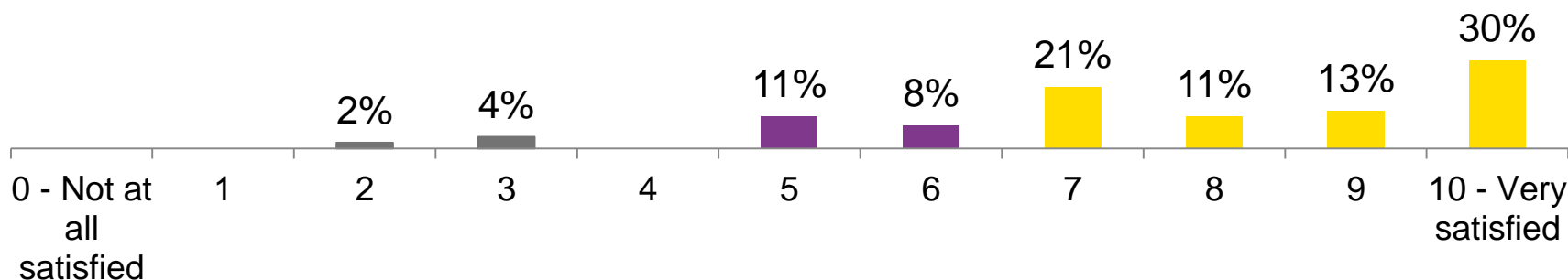


Young people (11-18yrs) were asked *how satisfied they were with their life* on a 0-10 scale.

This question exactly replicates The Children's Society survey question. A score of 7 or more is considered to be high life satisfaction. (The Cabinet Office, 2012)

- Like the general child population in England there was a positive correlation between high life satisfaction scores and being happy at school.

How satisfied are you with your life?



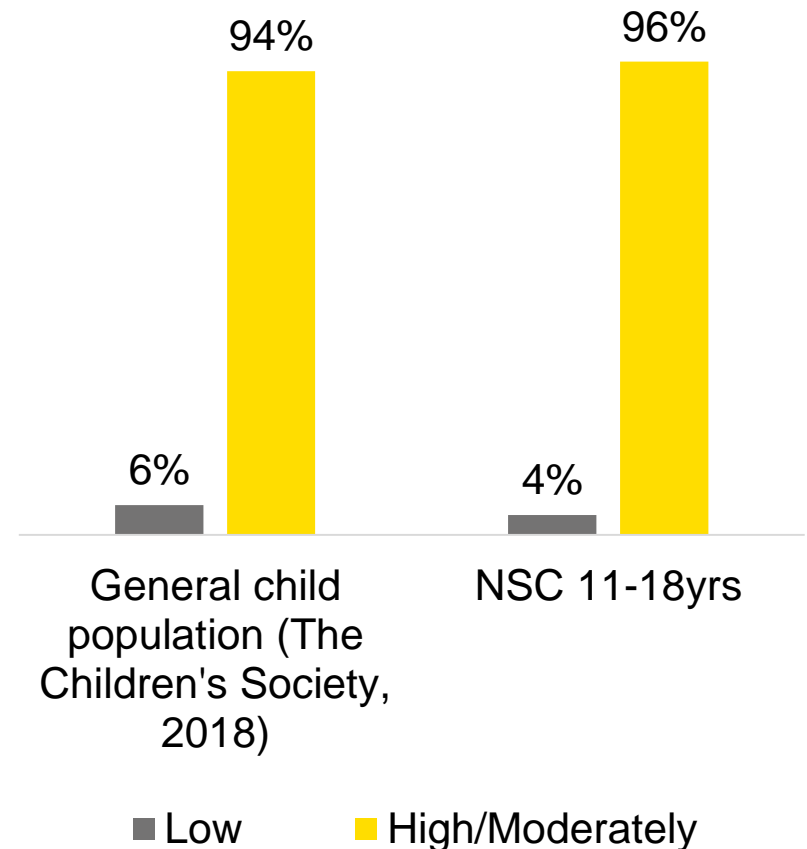
Are the things you do worthwhile?

Having a meaning or a purpose to life is strongly associated with well-being. (ONS, 2014)

Young people (11-18yrs) completed the same 0-10 scale as used by The Children's Society (2018) in their household survey with 3,000 young people aged 11-17yrs.

- 27 (59%) young people scored high or very high;
- 17 (37%) moderately; and
- 2 (4%) low.

Overall, to what extent do you think the things you do in your life are worthwhile?



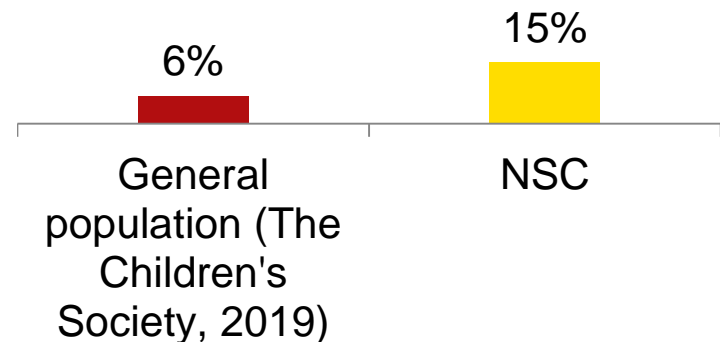
Positivity about the future



Optimism about the future is linked with happiness and resilience. (Conversano et al., 2010) Young people were asked on a scale of 0-10 *How positive are you about your future?*

- 27 (57%) were positive about their future.
- 13 (28%) were moderately positive about their future.
- 7 (15%) had low scores and did not feel positive about their future

Young people who were pessimistic about their future



Comparisons

Levels of well-being – NSC’s looked after young people (11-18yrs) compared to peers (10-17yrs) in the general population (The Children’s Society, 2019) and to the average scores of looked after young people in 17 LAs. About 40% of young people in NSC had very high well-being.

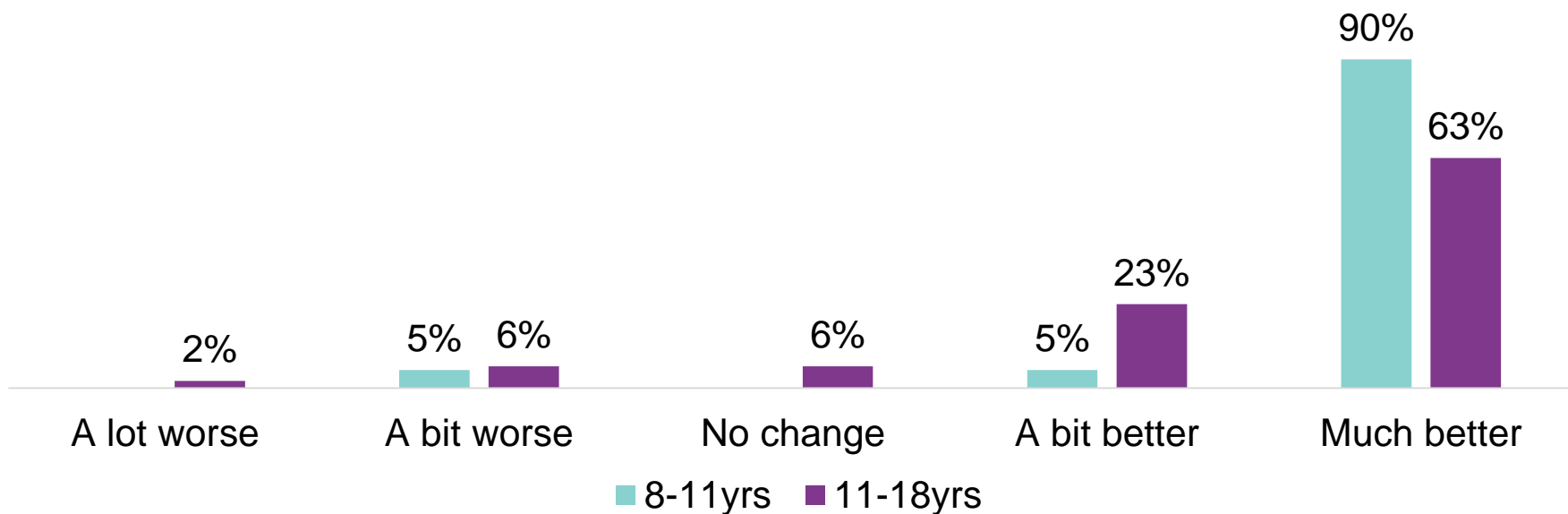
Question	Scores	North Somerset Council	2018 average in Peers in general pop. (10-17yrs)	17 LAs
Life satisfaction	Very high (9-10)	43%	34%	36%
	Low (0-4)	6%	15%	5%
Happiness yesterday	Very high (9-10)	50%	37%	33%
	Low (0-4)	13%	19%	6%
Things I do in life are worthwhile	Very high (9-10)	41%	37%	35%
	Low (0-4)	4%	12%	6%
Positivity about the future	Very high (9-10)	36%	36%	26%
	Low (0-4)	15%	11%	7%

Life is improving

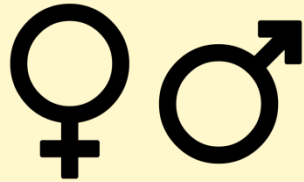
Children aged 8-18yrs were asked if they thought their *life was getting better*, and could choose from a five point scale ranging from 'A lot worse' to 'Much better'.

- The majority (89%) of children in NSC felt that their lives were improving.

Is your life improving?



Gender differences: 11-18yrs



The Children's Society (2017) reported that in the general population one in seven (14%) girls (10-15yrs) were unhappy with their lives as a whole as were one in ten boys.

Examining gender differences in our surveys in 2017, we found no gender difference in the surveys for 4-7yrs and 8-11yrs but girls aged 11-18yrs were more likely to report low well-being. Girls were four times more likely to be unhappy with their appearance and this contributed to gender differences in well-being. (Selwyn & Briheim-Crookall 2017)



- There were no statistically significant differences in the responses from boys and girls.

Low well-being: 4-7yrs



- 2 children in the 4-7yrs group described themselves as 'sad'.
- One child felt unsettled in foster care and disliked his bedroom.
- The other child did not give negative responses but skipped the questions on liking school and whether their carers noticed how they were feeling.

Low well-being: 8-11yrs



- One child described themselves as 'sad'. The child gave mainly positive responses to the questions but felt he was seeing his mother, father and siblings too much.

Low well-being: 11-18yrs



- 5 (11%) young people had low well-being (i.e. scored 4 or less on two or more of the 0-10 well-being scales). 2 girls and 3 boys
- Young people with low well-being also tended to report that they:
 - Worried about their feelings and behaviour.
 - Disliked their appearance.
 - Didn't talk to carers regularly about things that mattered to them.

Changes since last survey

4-7yrs

8-11yrs

11-18yrs



High Happy yesterday

76%  -11%

85%  +35%

73%  +28%



Satisfied with life as a whole

94%  -1%



Things they do are worthwhile

96%  +6%




Positive about the future

85%  -3%



Life is getting better

95%  +9%

86%  0%



Low overall well-being

11%  -1%



Section 4: Children and young people's comments

Is there anything else you would like to tell us? What would make being in care better for you?

Comments: 4-7yrs

- Four children (age 4-7yrs) gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*

[What would make care better?]
I wish I could see my mummy and daddy more.

I really like all the toys I have at my carers house.

If male carer was at home all of the time.

Having a play station.

Comments: 8-11yrs

- 6 children gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*

Staying with my carer means I can see my mum and dad.

I would like another person around my age to play with.

I like my social worker and my carer.

There is nothing that I want better in care.

*Would like to go to [XX] school again.
Live in a flat by the [XX] in a flat with mummy so that I can walk to school.*

[What would make care better?]
I would like to get a better relationship with my carer so I feel safer where I live. I would like someone who can understand my thoughts and feelings. I would prefer to live closer to my school, my friends and my family because I feel safer .

Comments: 11-18yrs

- 14 young people gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- One young people wrote: *"It's not as bad as you think it is"*, but another wrote, *"I hate it."*

I'd like support to make contact with my father as I have some questions for him.

Move quicker to assess my mum for a return home.

I am still waiting for a passport . No-one has supported me with this.

SW were saying I would get treated like an adult when I'm 16. But sometimes I didn't feel like that. I can't always watch what I want on the TV and use my phone and the iPad like I would like to. I feel that friends can stay out until 9.30 at night and I have to be in earlier. Also friends can stay over at other people's houses for longer than I can when having sleepovers.

Comments: What would make care better?

Young people 11-18yrs wrote that what would make care better was:

I wish people got stuff done when they said they were.

If my mum comes back.

Phones – want one.

Social workers actually telling the truth and make something happen that you want! like changing your name!

Sleep over with mum.

More things to do in the actual care home, contact sport, more free space to run around.



Section 5: References

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For enquiries about the Bright Spots project see:
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or contact:

brightspots@coramvoice.org.uk



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