

Our Life in Care

VOYPIC'S CASI SURVEY 2012

Our Life in Care is VOYPIC's computer assessed self interview (CASI) survey of the views of children and young people in care in Northern Ireland. It asked us questions about where we live, seeing our friends and family, health, education and being involved in making decisions about our lives.

A group of us who took part in this year's survey got together to think about what the most important issues are so that we could share them with you.



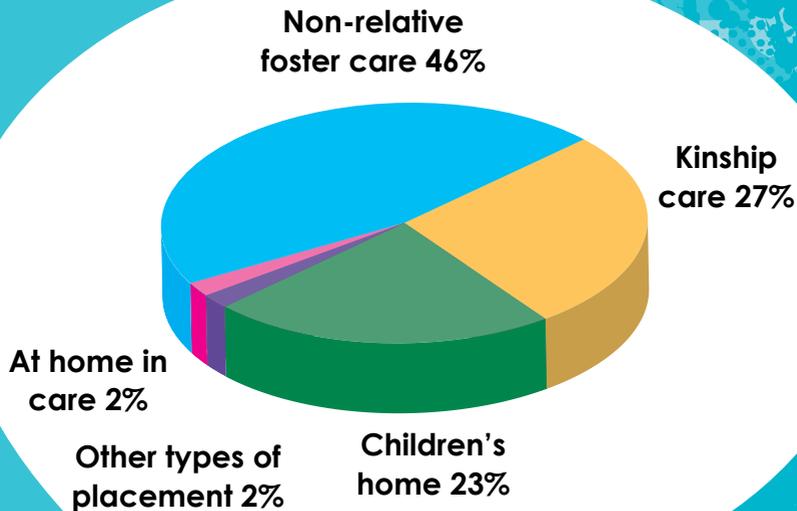
YOUNG PEOPLE'S REPORT

WHO TOOK PART IN OUR LIFE IN CARE?

156 children and young people in care across Northern Ireland aged 8 to 18 took part in the Our Life in Care 2012 survey. They did this online or with the help of VOYPIC staff on a laptop. As well as this report, which has been written by the young people who took part in the survey, you can check out the full report on the VOYPIC website.



WHERE DO WE LIVE?



I like it at my placement

I feel scared of some of the other children here

WHAT'S GOING WELL?

88% have good friends

71% can keep in touch with friends as often as they like

72% are never bullied at school or college

I tell my teacher and my foster mum and it gets sorted

95% can ask for help or support when they need it

86% feel completely safe where they live

79% feel completely settled where they live

It's my favourite place

WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

Only **16%** eat five or more portions of fruit or vegetables per day

I eat too much junk food

64% do not have enough, or nothing at all for a life story book

56% of 8 -11 year olds don't know what their care plan is

Only **13%** of 12 -15 year olds feel fully able to have a say in decisions made about their future

54% of 16 -18 year olds can't, or really can't, talk to their personal advisor about what is happening in their lives

I don't know anything about my pathway plan



SEEING OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

This is generally referred to as 'contact' but we decided to give this section a new title that describes what it really means to us. Here are some of the things we said about seeing our family and friends.



For young people in care it's hard to see people around you with their families and then you come home to your foster home and realise you don't have that anymore

Being able to talk about your family, getting help for this. Being able to see friends more too

Not seeing my mum and my friends as often as I'd like



For children to be able to see their parents when they can as well as their foster family

SUPPORT

Having support is an important issue for children and young people in care. There are lots of people who can offer support including your social worker, foster carer and the people at VOYPIC. Here are some of the things we said about the support we need.

Being looked after by my foster carers, being loved by my foster carers

I think if a young person in care has an issue about something then they should speak up about it and get help and support to deal with it

See your social worker often

If something bad happens...don't ignore it... I think there should be group meetings of other people in care to be together and to help them through their hard times



PLACEMENT

These are the places where we live. Where you live is very important and can impact on other areas of your life. Here are some of the things we said about our placements.

A happy place to live

That they feel safe where they live and they live somewhere they want

People should be in a nice place and should be very well treated and often go on holidays and have a good time with your foster family

Most important thing is [to] love their carers...don't have to be related to them; someone could love you but at the same time not be related to you





EQUALITY

Equality means being treated fairly or the same as everyone else. Even though we are in care, we have the same rights as everybody else. We should be allowed to make mistakes and learn from them, just like our friends who are not in care. Here's what we said about being treated fairly.

Not to feel ashamed that you are in care ...

Stigma about being in care and people being judgemental

Not being allowed to do things that normal teenagers are allowed to do

People in care are no different from other people in society and shouldn't feel any different

CARE AND PATHWAY PLANS

When a young person comes into care, a care plan is made for them. This covers stuff like where they live, arrangements for seeing family and friends and plans for the future. So you can see how important a care plan is. Some of us think it would help if plans were explained throughout our time in care, in a way that suits our age.

My foster
mum and dad
explained it

[I] don't have a
clue what's going
to happen. No one
has spoke to me
about it

I know what my
care plan is but
I don't have a
copy of it

When we turn 16, our personal advisor (PA) is supposed to work with us to develop our pathway plan. This is about where we will live, our education and seeing our family and friends.

[!] didn't think I was allowed [a copy of] one

I have never seen it

I know my pathway plan I made it



LISTEN TO ME

Young people have a right to express their thoughts freely and to have their views listened to. But you can be sure that if you don't talk, no one will listen to you. Here are some of the things we said about sharing our views and having them heard.

Being listened to, having their interests heard and something done about it

Young people [need] to be understood more and have more say in what happens to them and their family now and in the future

There is nothing I hate more than when people don't listen to what I have to say and talk over me!

Young people in care need to be listened to more and given the right to make their own decisions in life when they get to a certain age, as long as it won't get them in serious trouble



OTHER STUFF

We talked about things that were important to us that didn't fall into any of the other sections.

No issues that I can think of, as I am happy with everything in my life at the moment

Not being bullied when you are in care

I think you shouldn't have to change social workers when you're 16 as [you] have enough going on and enough changes without a new social worker, having to get to know them and find a bond

Getting money to do hobbies and activities like other children

Get some privacy

Be safe, trust your carers, trust your social worker, make sure everyone knows where you are going and be home on time

Too many young people are insecure because they haven't got someone to tell them their skills and qualities. This leads to a lot of issues ...

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE



EDUCATION

We want to know if Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are being useful and if all children and young people are getting the chance to have one.

CARE AND PATHWAY PLANS

We want all children and young people in care to have more say in what goes into their care or pathway plan.

SEEING FAMILY AND FRIENDS

We think all children and young people in care should be able to see their family and friends if they want and it is safe to do so. We want help to understand the reasons if we can't see our family and friends.





OUR COMMUNITY

We want foster carers, support workers and social workers to go on encouraging us at school and in community activities so we feel included.

INDEPENDENCE

We want help to find part-time jobs when we are ready to work and earn our own money.

CHALLENGING IMAGES

We want to hear more positive stories about children in care.

PLACEMENT

We want all children and young people to feel safe, settled and secure where they live.



Now that you've heard what we had to say in Our Life in Care 2012, why not get involved and have your voice heard too? If you want to find out more about OLC 2012, or how to take part in OLC 2013, check out our website:

www.voypic.org

like us on Facebook and follow us on twitter @VOYPIC #OLCNI



HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD GET INVOLVED IN OUR LIFE IN CARE 2013...

I think this will help young people

It was easy to use

I really enjoyed doing this questionnaire

