

# Our Life in Care

## VOYPIC'S CASI SURVEY 2013

Our Life in Care is VOYPIC's survey of the views of children and young people in care. It used computer assisted self-interview or "CASI" questionnaires.

It gave children and young people in care aged 8 to 18 across Northern Ireland the chance to voice their opinions on different things that affect their lives.

It asked us questions about where we live, seeing our friends and family, health, education, and being involved in making decisions about our lives.



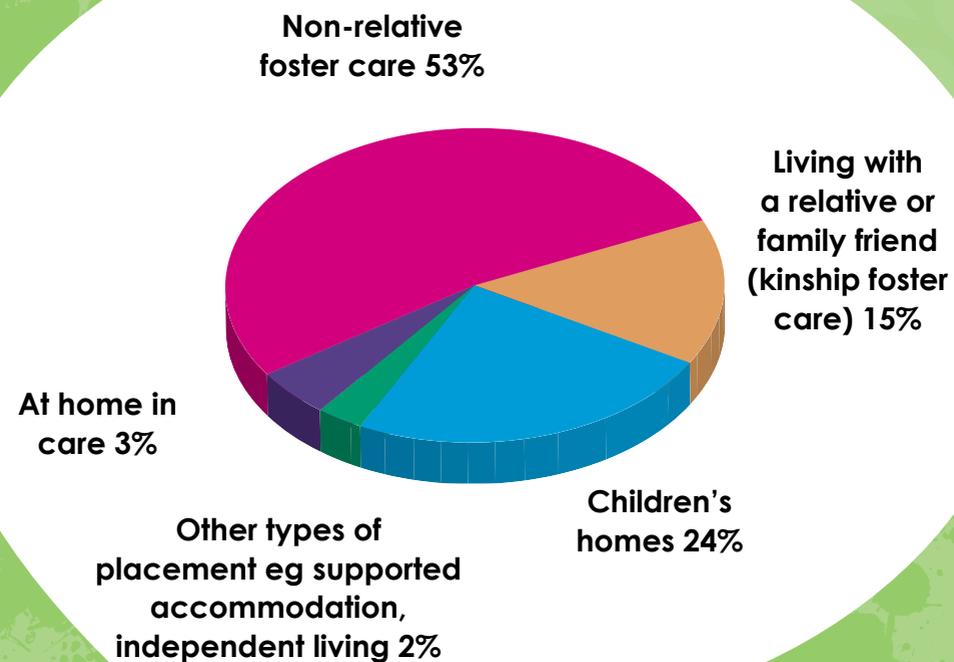
# **YOUNG PEOPLE'S REPORT**

# WHO TOOK PART IN OUR LIFE IN CARE?

In 2013, 105 children and young people in care throughout Northern Ireland, aged 8 to 18 took part in Our Life in Care. We were able to do the survey online or with the help of VOYPIC staff on a laptop. As well as this report, which was designed and written by young people, you can check out the full report of the survey on the VOYPIC website.



# WHERE DO WE LIVE?



My current placement is more of a home or family than anything else

It's important they like their placement

# WHAT'S GOING WELL?

## SUPPORT...SAFETY

**88%** have an adult they can trust

**87%** have good friends

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

**90%** can ask for help or support when they need it

**83%** feel completely safe where they live

**79%** feel completely settled where they live

My life is full of trustworthy people

The friends I have are good friends



# WHAT COULD GO BETTER?

## NUTRITION...LIFE STORY BOOKS...CARE PLANNING

Only **13%** eat five or more portions of fruit or vegetables per day

**70%** do not have enough, or nothing for a life story book

**39%** of 8 to 11 year olds said someone has talked to them about what is in their care plan

**62%** of 12 to 15 year olds do not or don't know if they have a copy of their care plan

**55%** of 16 to 18 year olds can't or really can't talk to their personal adviser about what is happening in their lives



# SEEING OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

This is often called 'contact' but we prefer to call it 'seeing our family and friends' because that is what it means to us. In the survey we answered questions about how this is going for us and here are some of the things we said.

Sometimes I go to their house, sometimes they come here and we have a lot of fun here ...

To get the chance to meet my friends and go back to my area as much as I want

I was moved too far away

Contact is facilitated twice a week but I wish this would be increased



# 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 foster carer, social worker and friends. Here are some of the things we said about the support we need.

That they are given enough support to cope with what situation they are in and also that they are able to get on with their lives while they continue to stay in touch with their families

What's going to happen to them, why they are in care, what can they do to make it better, who can help them, who can they turn to if they need advice, family, friends, school, hobbies and interests

As well as emotional support, young people said that they need financial support.

..... Also, many children need more support in further education for example, continuing their A Levels and then going to university. I am a capable pupil at a grammar school and want to go to university ... but don't know what support there is available for me once I leave school to help me proceed to uni

# WHERE WE LIVE

This is all about where we live. It is very important and can impact on other parts of our lives. Here are some of the things we said and feel about the places we live.

I think kids should have a say on where they want to live

You should be safe and live with people who care about you

I love it because I'm with my granny

I don't like it when they say foster care, I don't think of myself as in care. I think of myself as just being with my new family. I hate having to refer to my family as foster mums or foster grandparents/foster uncle and aunts. To me they are just my family



# EQUALITY

Equality means being treated the same as everyone else and we have the right to be treated that way. 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.

Getting your phone took off you when there are other people at more high risk and then you're sitting there with no phone and then you have no mates and you can't talk to anyone

Change people's views on kids in care

It is important to me not to be neglected, worried about things or treated differently

There should be more positive stories about children in care

# CARE AND PATHWAY PLANS

In the survey, some of us said that we didn't know what our care plan was. A care plan is really important – it's about where we live, arrangements for seeing family and friends and plans for the future.

We think it would be helpful if care plans were explained in a way that we can understand and explained all the way through our time in care, not just when we come into care.



Here are some of the comments we made about care and pathway plans.

Everything about me I know

My social worker talks to me about it

I don't know what it is

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

I don't know what this is and I don't think I have one

I helped them come up with the plan

Yes because I was there when they were being made

## LISTEN TO ME

Another issue that we felt was important for children and young people in care was being listened to. We have the right to express our views so if we take the chance to talk, we want to be listened to. Here's some of what we said on this.

To be listened to and have opinions respected

The social workers should actually listen to us as we know exactly in our own minds what we want and need

To have their opinions heard and valued, no person wants their opinions to be discredited

It is important that you have a say in everything that's happening about you because at the end of the day it is about you and others shouldn't be making decisions about you



## OTHER STUFF THAT'S IMPORTANT

We talked about lots of other things that are important to us from stability to the internet! Read all about it in the full 2013 report on VOYPIC's website.

Every issue is important but I would highlight having too many placement movements and social worker changes

I feel intimidated and threatened living here because of my religion

Far too many, there needs to be a change, I know people can change jobs and want to do different things, but there needs to be more permanent social workers working with children and young people, it is quite hard to trust anyone if you have a lot of change and people coming in and out of your life

I think there should be Wi-Fi in children's homes so they can do their homework

# WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

## CARE AND PATHWAY PLANNING

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

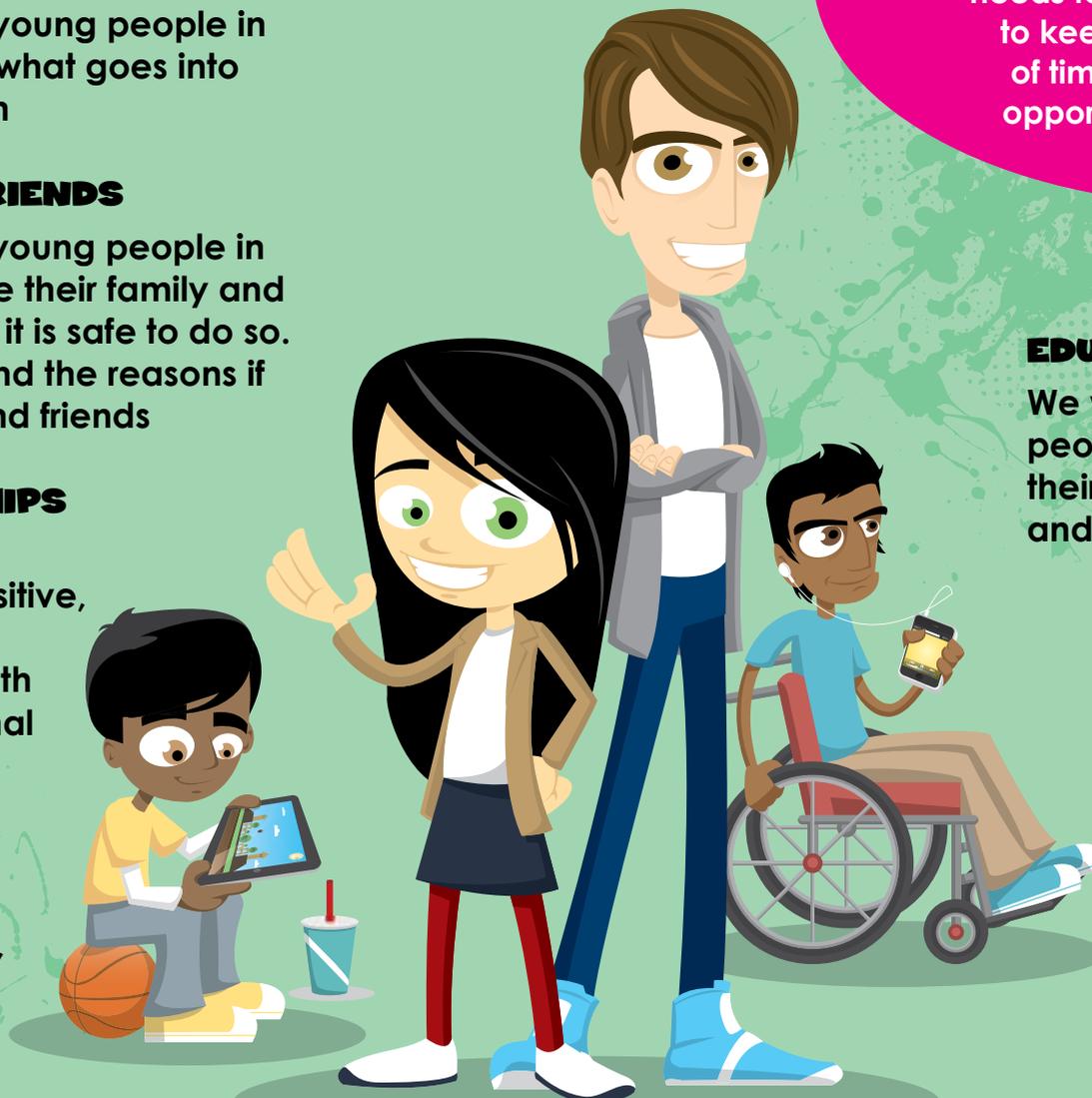
We think all children and young people in care should be able to see their family and friends if they want to and it is safe to do so. We want help to understand the reasons if we can't see our family and friends

## POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

We want all children and young people to have positive, stable and supportive relationships especially with social workers and personal advisors

## WHERE WE LIVE

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



I am with my carers since 2002 and wish more children had the opportunity that I have had. I will stay with them after I am 18. I think there needs to be more foster carers willing to keep children on for this length of time to give the child the best opportunities they can offer them

## EDUCATION

We want all children and young people to be supported through their education to help them learn and achieve

## KEEP ME SAFE

We want all children and young people to be safe and protected from harm

## VOICE

We want all children in care and care leavers to have a right to an advocate to be sure their voice is heard

This is the end of VOYPIC's three year pilot project but we hope there's a future for this survey. For now, let's say thank you to all 333 children and young people who took part in the Our Life in Care surveys over the past three years. Thank you for how honest you have been.

It's our hope that VOYPIC can use all our views to help make things better for all children and young people in care in the future.

Let's remember some of the great things young people hoped for since 2011...

To be happy with my life, have a family, friends, nice things and a job that I enjoy and want to do for the rest of my life  
Male, 2012

**THANK YOU!**

Support, friendship, love and care  
Female, 2011

To feel safe, to get on with the family you're living with, to feel cared for and loved, to feel part of a family and being included, to live a life like a child that is not in care  
Female, 2013

[www.voypic.org](http://www.voypic.org)

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