



**Queensland**  
**Foster and**  
**Kinship Care**

# CARER EXIT SURVEY

## South West Region

### 2018-2019

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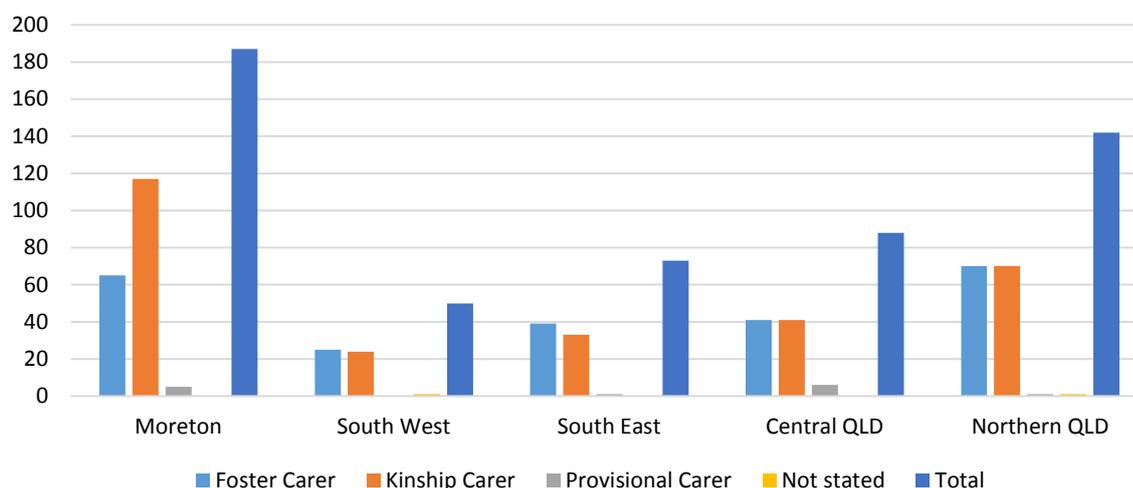
## Executive Summary

### Information relating to End of Carer Approval Notices

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

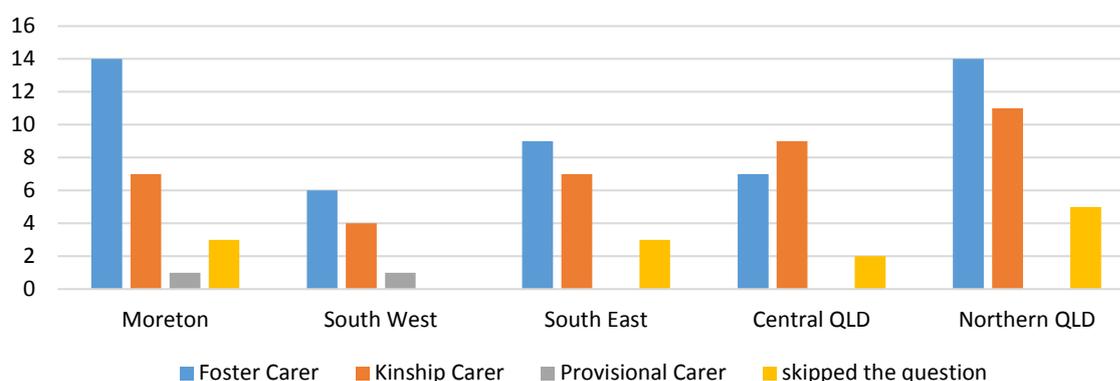
QFKC received a total of 540 Exit Interview referrals for the period **1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019**. 240 of the total were Foster Carers, 285 of the total were Kinship Carers, 13 were Provisional Carers and 2 did not state what the carer status was.

#### End of Carer Approval Notices received by QFKC during the period of 1st July 2018-30th June 2018



103 Exit Surveys were completed on Survey Monkey, either by the carers directly, QFKC inputting the data on the carer's behalf from a paper based survey that the carer was sent and returned to QFKC or the carer requested a telephone interview and QFKC inputted the data on to Survey Monkey during the telephone interview. The return rate this year in relation to completed surveys, is 19%.

#### People who completed the Exit Survey



The procedures for responding to notifications of End of Carer Approval Notices is as follows;

- QFKC send a letter when they receive the End of Carer Approval Notice from the Department, informing the person/persons that QFKC has received the End of Carer Approval Notice and would like to provide information about their experiences as carers. The letter also provides a number of ways they can complete the survey, either online, over the phone, or have a paper survey sent out with a return stamp addressed envelope, which would then be input into Survey Monkey by QFKC.
- After a two week period QFKC would follow up via phone call where possible with the former carers to confirm receipt of the letter and discuss the opportunity to provide their experiences. When no phone contact details have been provided, QFKC would email the former carer/s if email details were included on the End of Carer Approval Notices.

It has been noted over the years that QFKC do not receive all the End of Carer Approval Notices that should be provided to QFKC to give the opportunity to people who would like to undertake a survey and this needs to improve to ensure equal opportunity for everybody to provide feedback.

As stated in previous reports QFKC continue to receive a number of End of Carer Approval Notices however based on the figures provided by the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women we continue to receive significantly less notifications than we should be receiving. QFKC has endeavoured to address this significant issue in previous years and it would appear that less than half of the End of Carer Approval Notices have been received again by QFKC in the year 2018-2019 when comparing the figures that are provided on the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women website. The lack of understanding by regions as to the importance of QFKC receiving all End of Carer Approval Notices has a direct impact on the integrity of the program and places a question as to whether this undertaking is viable in the future. QFKC absolutely believe the data has validity and strength however the full potential of the data cannot be reached if we do not have (all) the notices.

## Overall Data and Findings

This report outlines the feedback from all 103 carers and it is sectioned into regions so that the information is specific to the feedback from each region.

Overall, 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
- 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
- The manner in which the carer approval renewal process was undertaken

These comments are 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.

Overall across the State, there were similarities in terms of negative feedback provided, listed below are common themes from information provided in the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 reports;

The majority of responses relating to interactions with Child Safety identified that the carer felt;

- Unsupported
- Did not feel valued
- Lack of communication

The majority of responses identifying that the carer left due to issues with the children placed with them, stated it was for the following reasons;

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

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 reports for each region and this would be suggestive that this is a State-wide issue in regards to the feedback provided.

Some areas of care were identified as equally satisfied and dissatisfied in their responses;

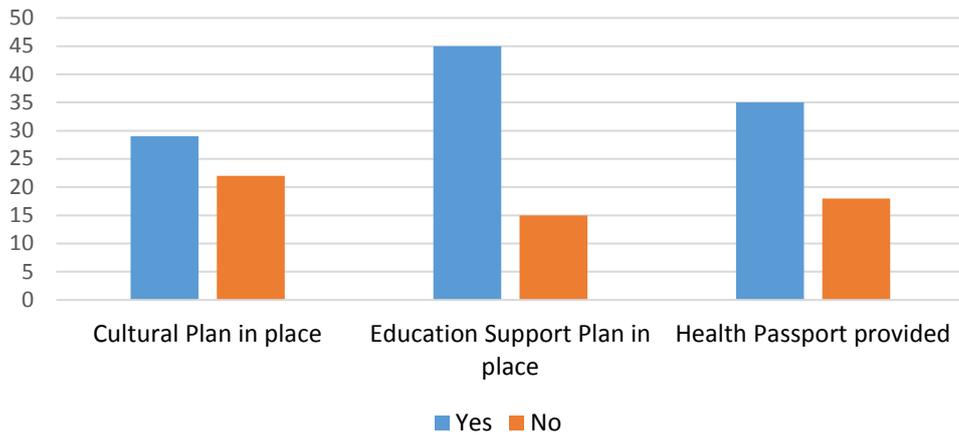
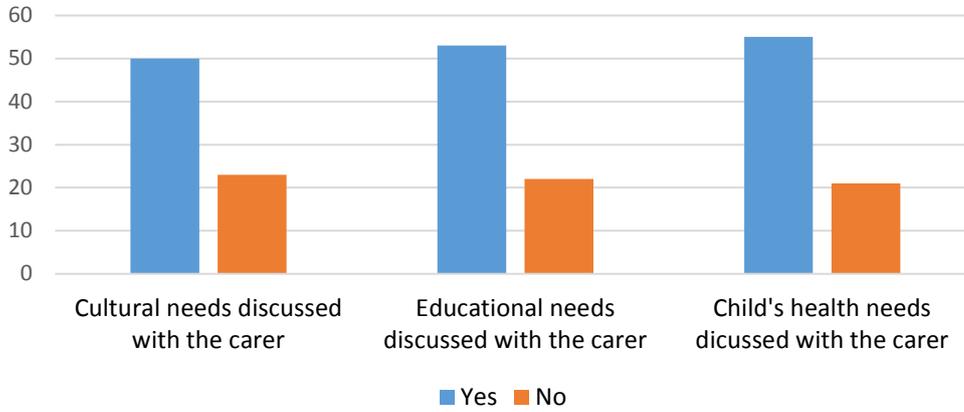
- Child Safety's policies and procedures dealing with Harm Report/SOC process
- Handling of a Harm Report/SOC process
- Outcome of discussions with Child Safety
- Discussions with FAST Reps

People were asked if they had attended training in the last 12 months, 76 people responded to this question and 20 people stated they had attended but 56 people stated they had not attended training.

People were also asked if they had a Foster Care Agreement in place and 56 people stated they did and 4 people stated they didn't.

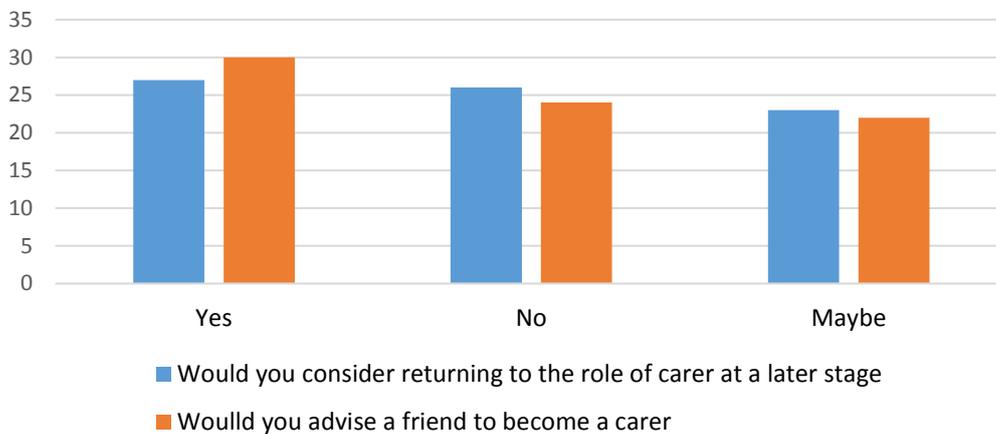
In relation to the needs of the child the following information was identified;

### Child's needs



People completing the survey were asked if they would advise a friend to become a carer and would they consider returning to the role of carer at a later stage, the responses overall for QLD are listed below;

### Overall



In summary, an equal number of people identified that they would/wouldn't consider returning to foster care at a later stage. A slightly lower number of people identified that they may consider returning to the role of caring at a later stage. The responses are also similar for "would you advise a friend to become a carer".

The majority of carers who completed the survey identified that they started fostering due to a desire to help children. This information has also been consistent throughout the years, but this was diminished by the lack of feeling valued or being part of a care team.

While reading the responses there was one response that summarised all the information relating to lack of feeling valued and being part of a care team, I have taken the extract from the responses word for word and QFKC feel that the response is very relevant to how people are feeling.

*"A simple thank you at the end of placement would do wonders"*

**Completed by:**  
Marijka Kelly  
Recruitment and Exit Co-ordinator

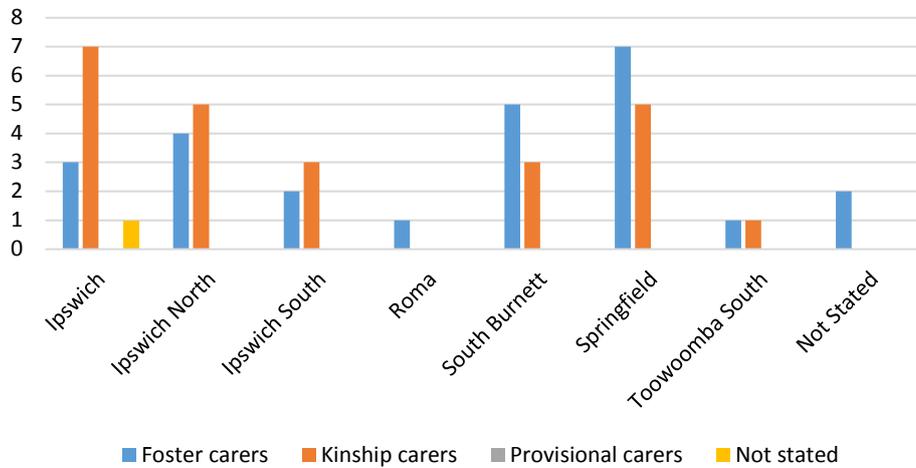
**Presented by:**  
Bryan Smith  
Executive Director

8 August 2019

## Summary – South West

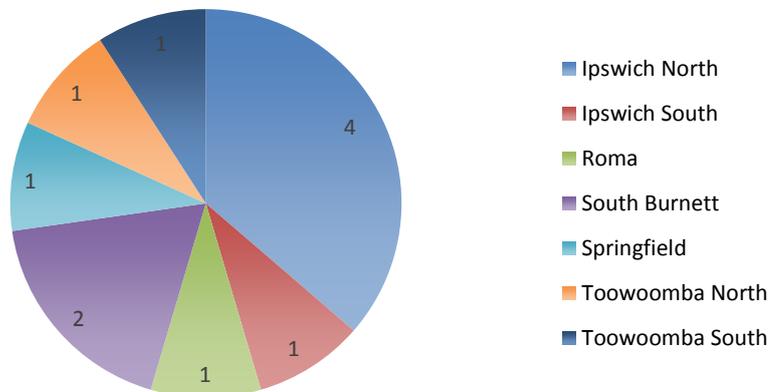
Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (here after referred to as QFKC) received 540 End of Carer Approval Notices during the period of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 30 June 2019. 187 (34.6%) of the End of Carer Approval Notices were received from the South West region and affiliated with the following service centres. Please note that sometimes all the required information is not provided to QFKC.

### End of Carer Approval Notices

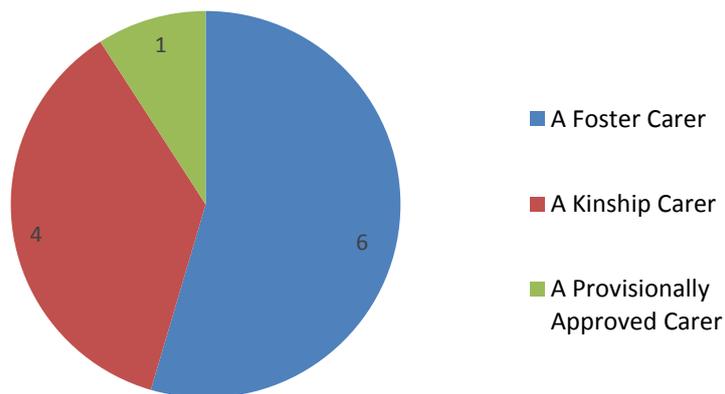
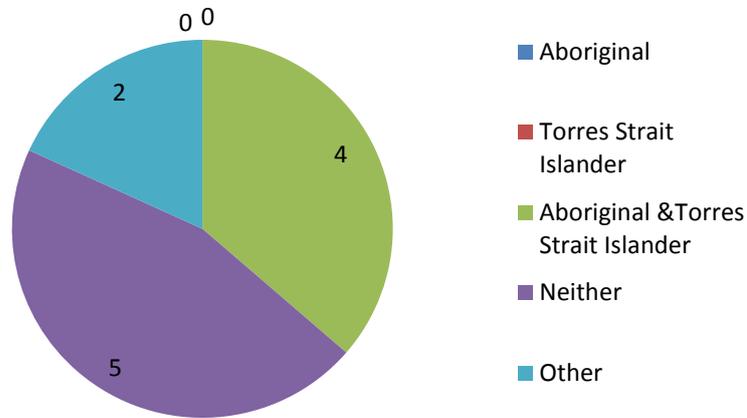


## About You

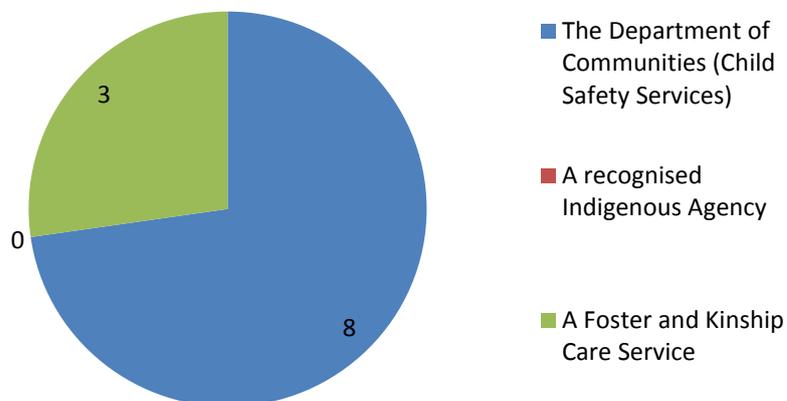
All 50 end of carer approvals were sent an acknowledgment letter from QFKC asking them if they wanted to complete an exit survey. There were 11 people completed the survey, affiliated with the following service centres:



From the 11 people who completed the survey for the South West region the following information was shared;

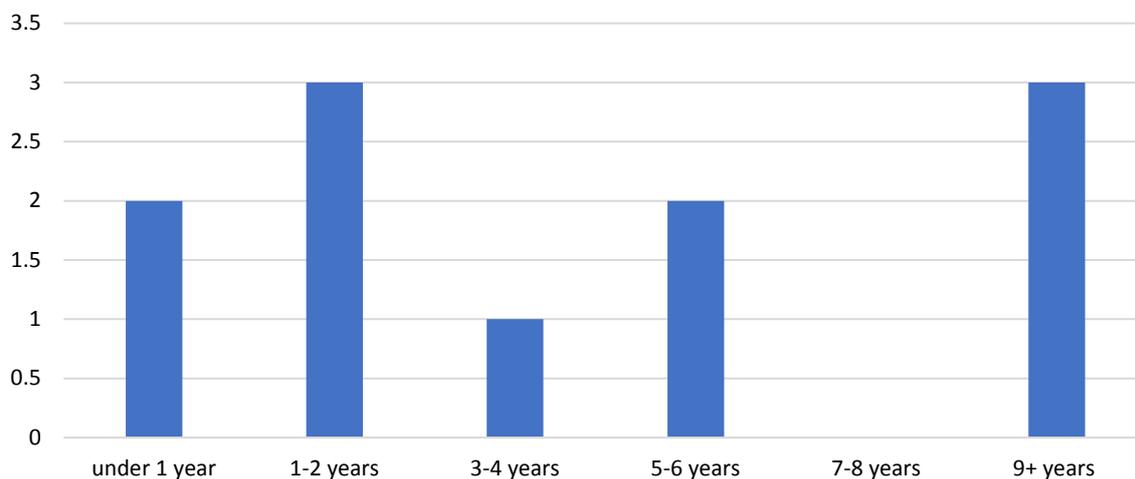


People were asked to identify who they are supported by, they answered as follows;



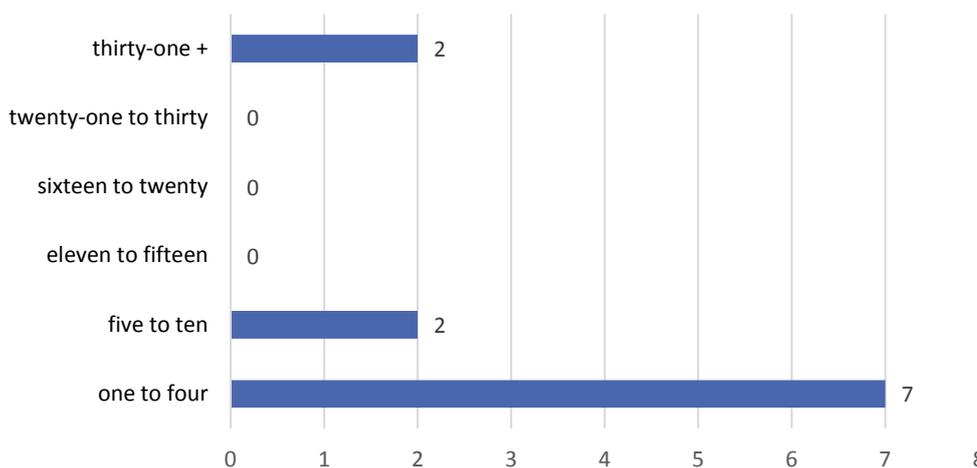
Information is requested regarding the person’s time spent as a carer; to identify when they started as a Carer and when they stopped. Below is a graph that identifies the length of time stated in the responses.

### Number of years being a carer



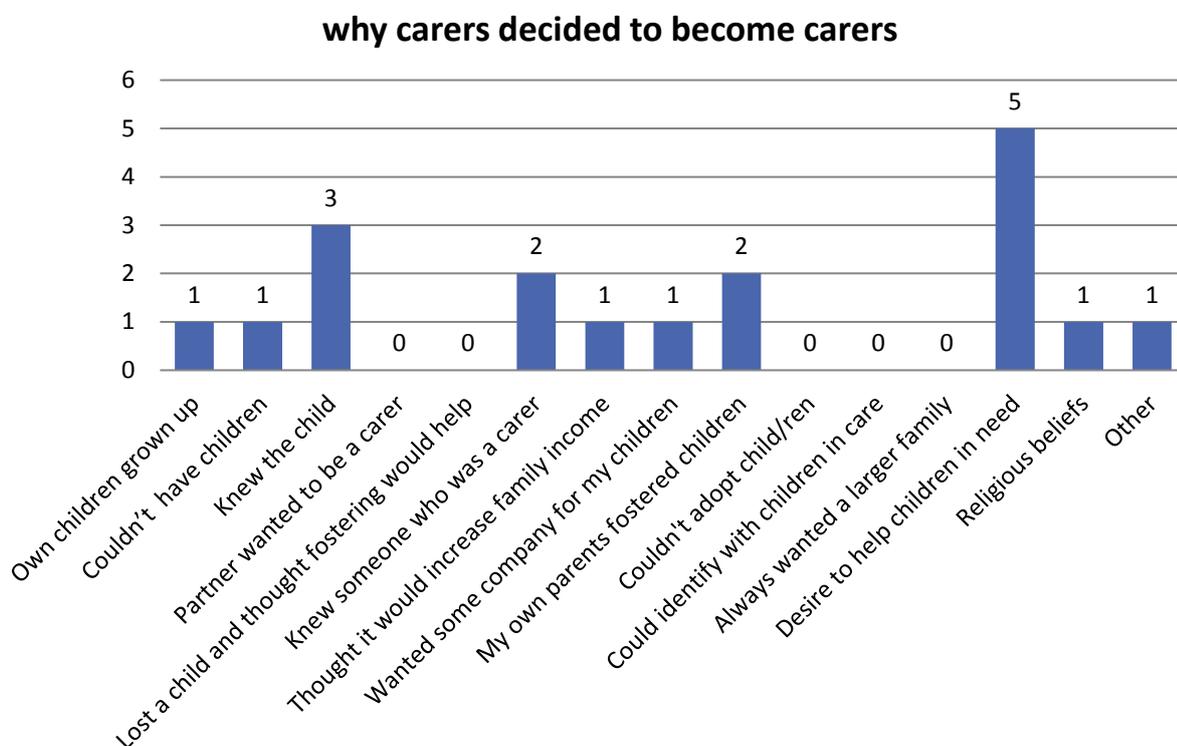
The information provided also evidences the amount of children the person/persons have provided care to.

### Number of Children



## About You as a Carer

People were asked to identify what made them decide to become a Foster Carer.



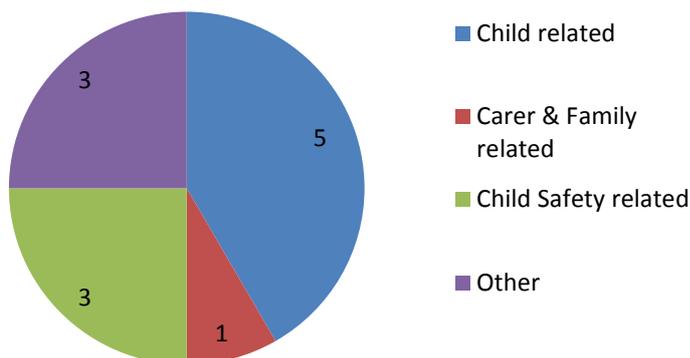
**Below is a selection of some of the comments provided by the people undertaking the survey in relation to why they decided to become a carer. This information would be consistent with the section under *other* on the graph:**

- Family member able to take care of great granddaughter
- The girl was asked to leave her foster family for the second time and was placed in residential care in Toowoomba as it was the only place available. I am a teacher at her school and wanted to provide a safe and caring environment for her
- I wanted to give children a safe place to live and the support and love that they needed from parents. A loving home where they could express themselves as independent children who had a right to be heard
- Had 'Authority to Care' for my grandson due to short term custody order
- Only family member at time in a position to take on Kinship care of great granddaughter

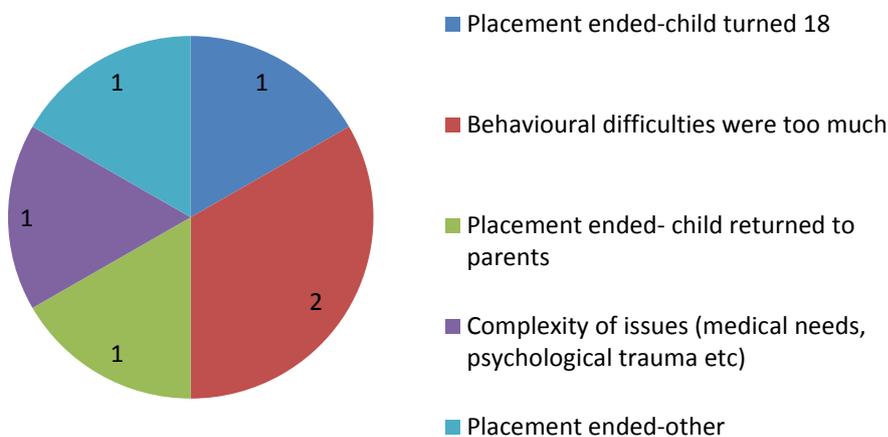
## Reason for Discontinuing as a Foster/Kinship Carer

People undertaking the survey were asked to provide the reason why they decided to stop being carers. They are provided with four options then asked to elaborate in relation to the option that they have selected.

### Main reason for deciding to stop being a carer



The following information will be specific to the reason that has been provided in this question. If the respondents answered that they ceased being carers due to child related reasons, they are asked to expand on the reasons, as follows.



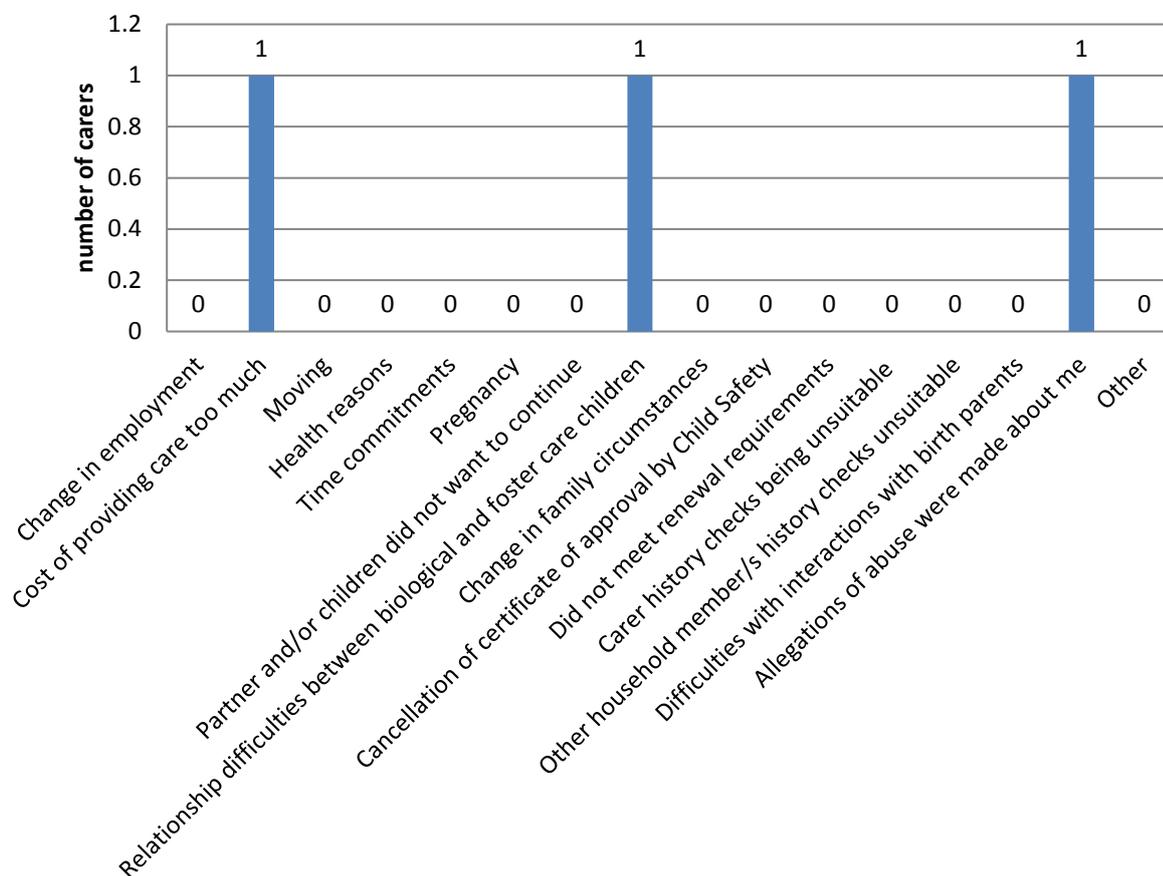
**Below are extracts of comments that were made by people completing the survey in relation to this question:**

- children said they feel unsafe
- Child Safety put a standard of care on us when the children said one day they wanted to never leave here to they don't feel safe here shortly after contact started
- Custody order coming to an end
- The girl wanted to have access to her former foster family whenever she chose and did not like the department or me putting a contact plan in place

- No support from department or from fostering agency, no support and understanding for current family situation, fostering agency not wanting to renew my fostering agreement, and wanted us to resign against our wishes
- The conduct of Child Safety the way they brought concerns up, put my husband and I on the spot, I put in complaint and still have had no answer to this day. No response to my complaint. I had one boy tested for autism and Child Safety have not even taken this into account that autistic children have confused feelings and emotions. But Child Safety put a standard of Care on us and didn't even allow us to defend ourselves
- Behavioural difficulties
- Child was able to now be placed with another family member, her grandfather (my son)
- The child chose to return to her previous carers
- No, children had no bearing on decision. I did not resign fostering agency refused to renew our application
- Child Safety conduct
- No comment

For people who stated that they ceased caring due to carer and family reasons, they were asked to expand on their response.

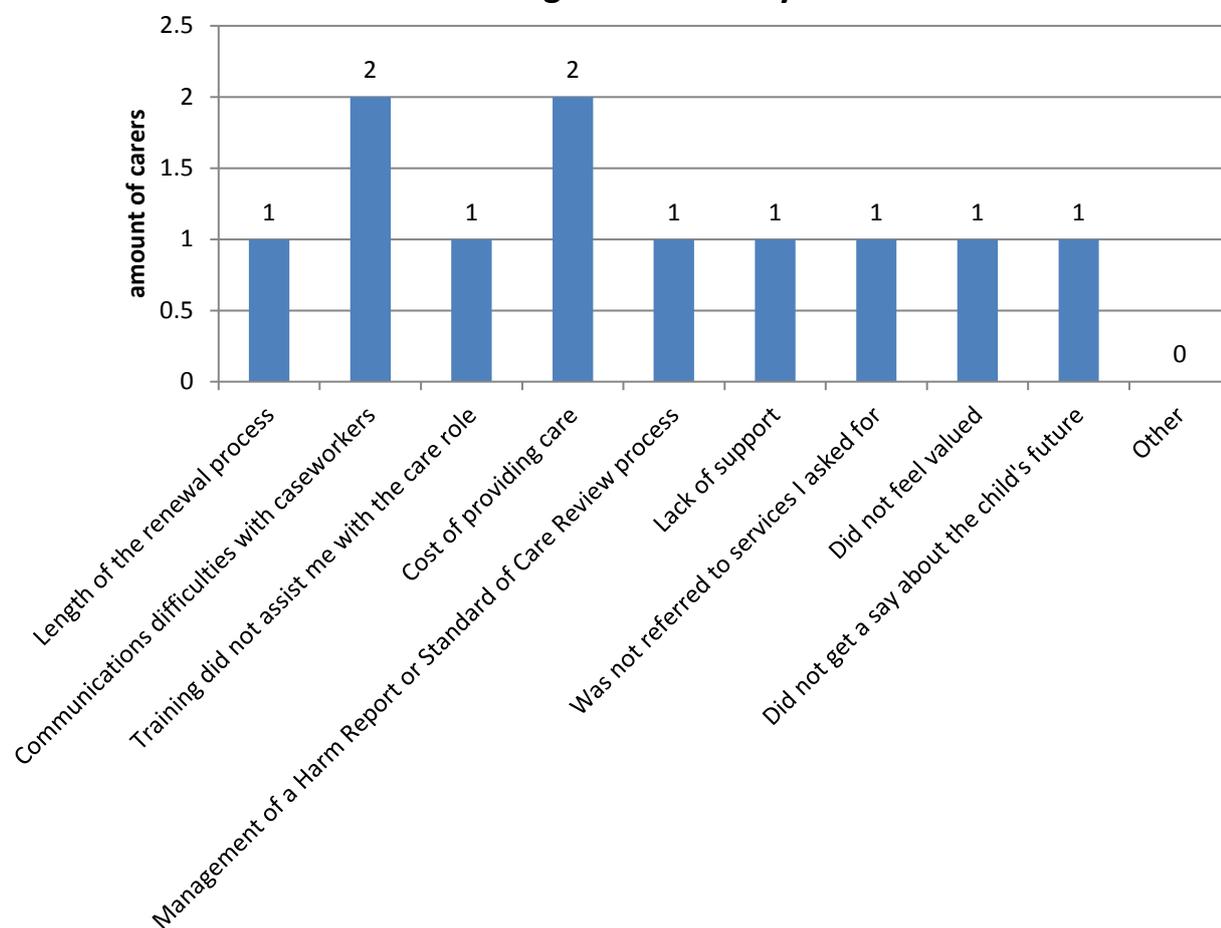
### Ceased being a carer for carer and family related reasons



**Comments provided:**

- Fostering agency refusal to renew. I refused to resign
- Child advised Child Safety they felt unsafe with us. I have requested they call the school as it is a very different answer. The children felt unsafe going to see their dad not us

### Response from carer when ceasing care due to issues relating to Child Safety Services

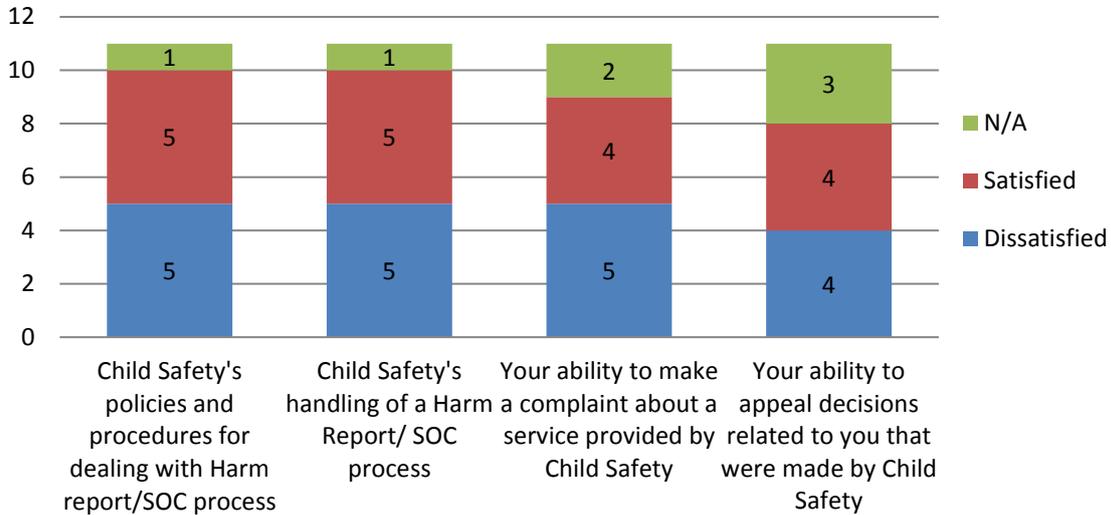


**Below are extracts of comments made by carers in relation to the questions referring to why they ceased as Carers if this was related to Child Safety Services.**

- Case workers refusal to renew
- Her mother constantly undermining us
- Undue influence /interference of previous foster family even though they had thrown Gypsy out twice
- Support
- Placement Ended
- Not having the support as a carer and feeling like no one wanted to help or support my family while fostering. Support from the department and Foundations were not there
- I did not resign, case worker refused to renew. It wasn't my decision, the decision was made for me, I didn't have a say, I didn't sign anything either

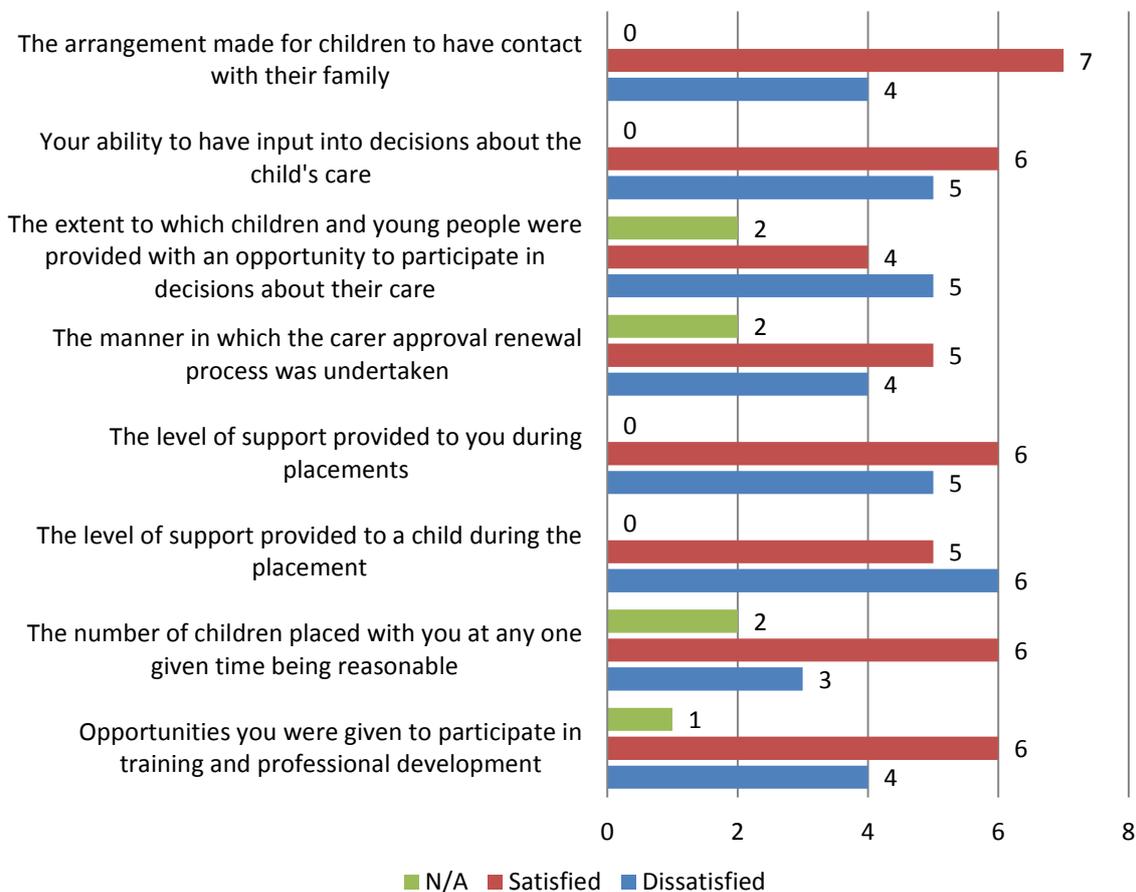
**People undertaking the surveys were asked how satisfied they were with different elements of their involvement with the Department of Child Safety.**

### In regards to Child Safety, how satisfied were you with



## The Experience of Caring

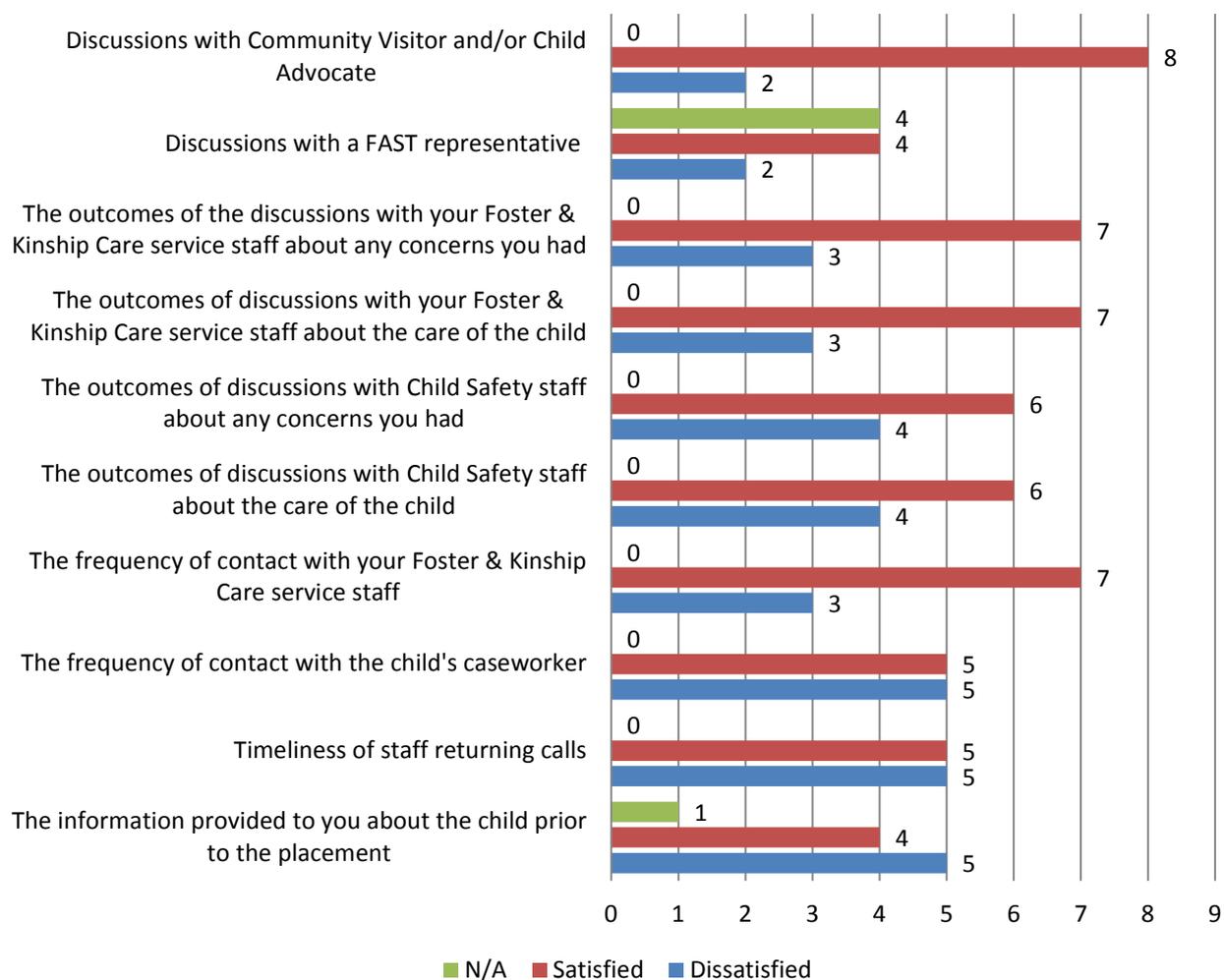
### How satisfied were you with



## The Experience of Caring: Communication

Carers were asked how satisfied they were with their experiences of communication with relevant stakeholders. Below is a table that outlines the responses and extracts of further comments that they wanted to make in relation to the question.

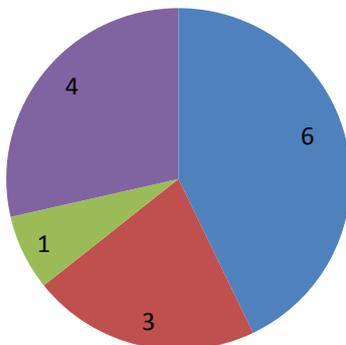
### How satisfied were you with



The carers were asked to identify whether Child Safety discussed the following matters with them:

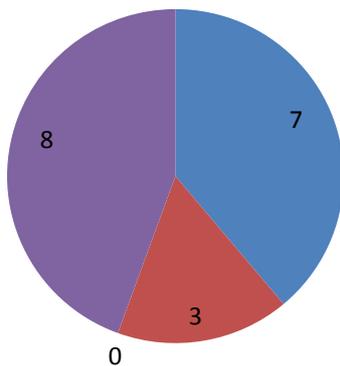
### The child's cultural support needs

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, was there a cultural support plan in place



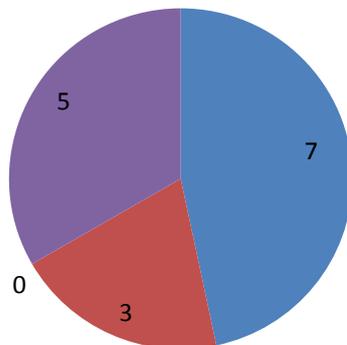
### The child's educational needs

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, was there an education support plan in place



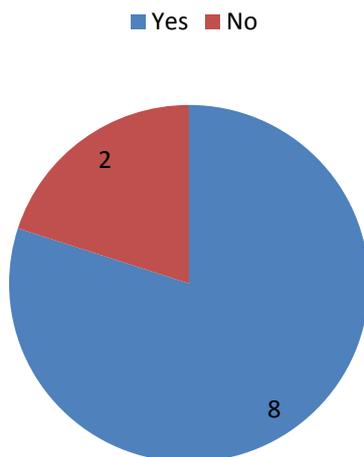
### The child's health needs

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, did the child have a current child health passport



Carers were asked if they had received information regarding FAST Representatives and QLD Foster and Kinship Care, the table below identifies their responses:

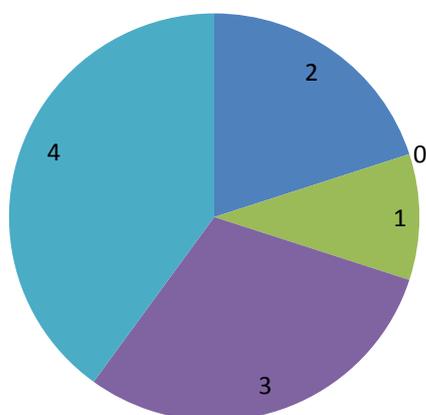
### Did you receive information about FAST and/or QLD Foster and Kinship Care (formerly Foster Care QLD)



### Experience of Caring: Contact

#### How often did you have contact with Child Safety staff

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Fortnightly ■ Monthly ■ Only occasionally



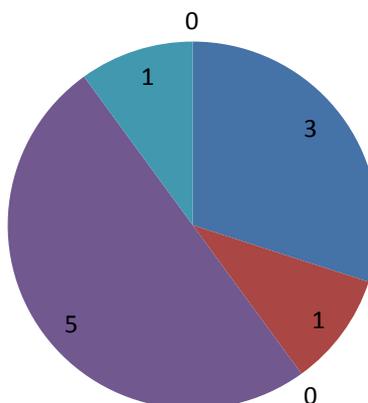
### How did contact occur?

■ Phone call ■ Home Visit ■ Email ■ Meeting at the office ■ Other



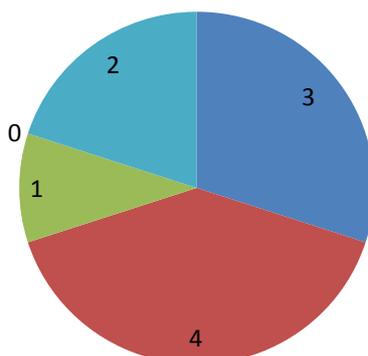
### How often did you have contact with your Foster and Kinship Care Service?

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Fortnightly ■ Monthly ■ Only occasionally ■ Not applicable



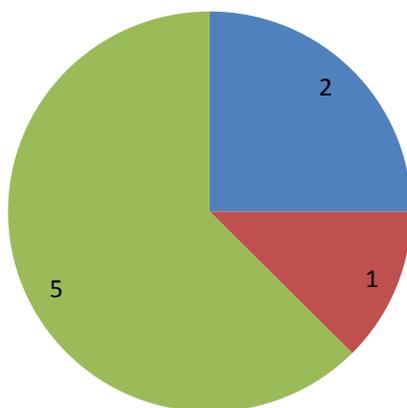
### How did this contact occur?

■ Phone call ■ Home visit ■ E-mail ■ Meeting at the office ■ Other



### What was your preference regarding contact?

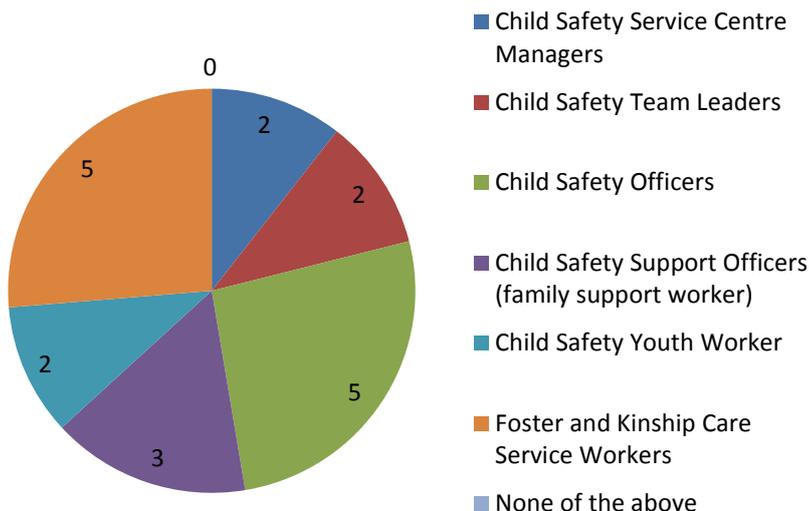
■ E-mail ■ Phone ■ Face to face



**Comments provided:**

- Only contact we had was on contact visit for 2 mins. weekly. Child Safety only visited our home 3 times during the 14 months the children were in care
- Weekly or monthly and fortnightly to monthly
- Key Assets were great

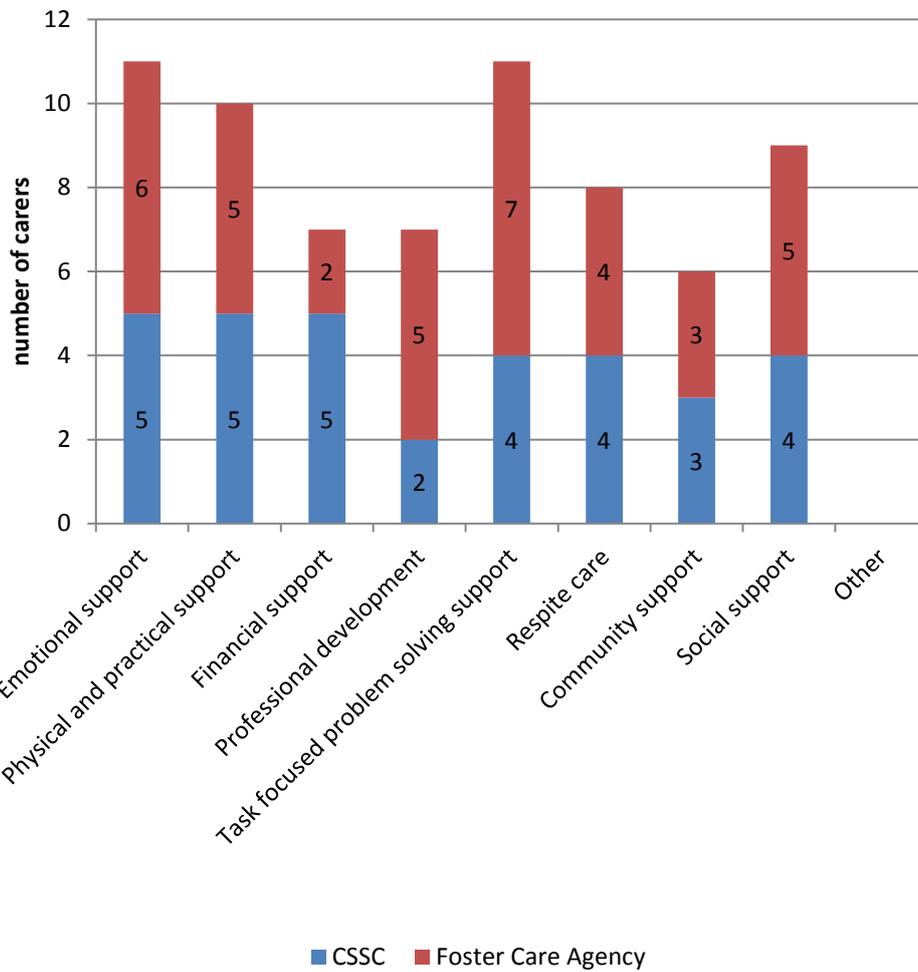
### Which of the following persons did you usually have contact with?



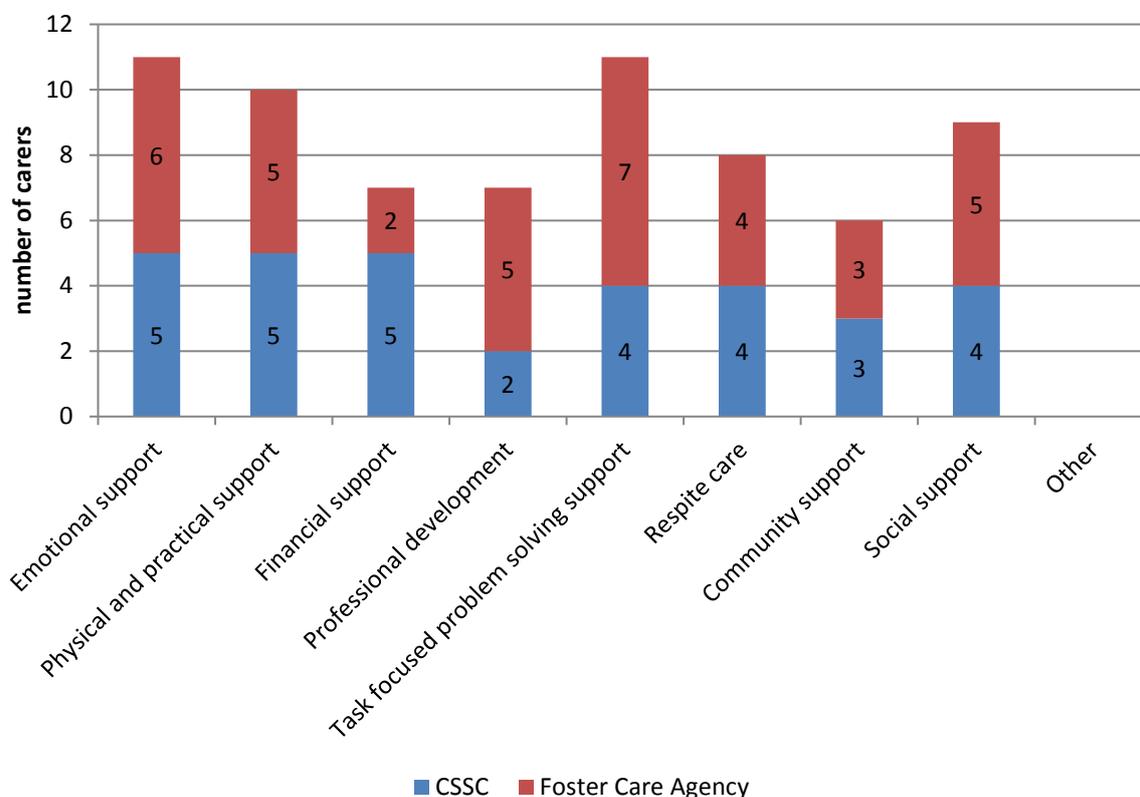
## The Experience of Caring: Support

This section addresses the experience of caring and support received.

**Please indicate whether during your time as a foster carer you requested any of the following supports from Child Safety and or your Foster & Kinship Care Service**



**Please indicate whether during your time as a foster carer you received any of the following supports from Child Safety and or your Foster & Kinship Care Service**



**Carers were asked to provide responses to two questions:**

- Did they seek or receive any other form of support, and where was this from?
- Were there other supports you would have liked access to?

**Below are the responses supplied:**

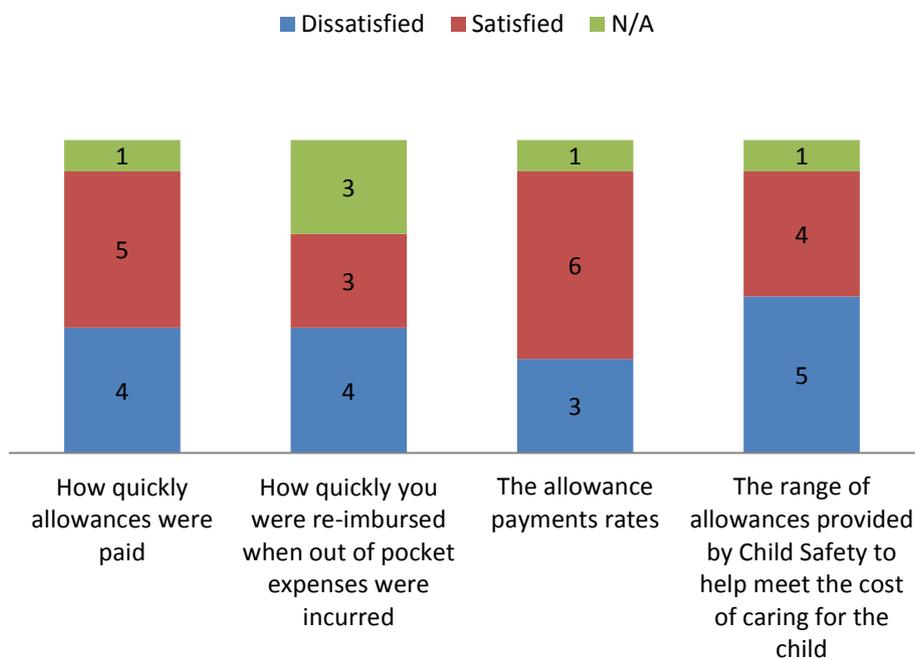
- From external agencies about emotional support for the child in care.
- Close family members support.
- No
- No
- From other carers

**Responses to, were there other supports you would have like to access:**

- Training to deal with behaviours, refresher courses. Emotion support for my family, coinciding for my family to help deal with the impact of fostering

## The Experience of Caring: Financial Support

### Financial Support

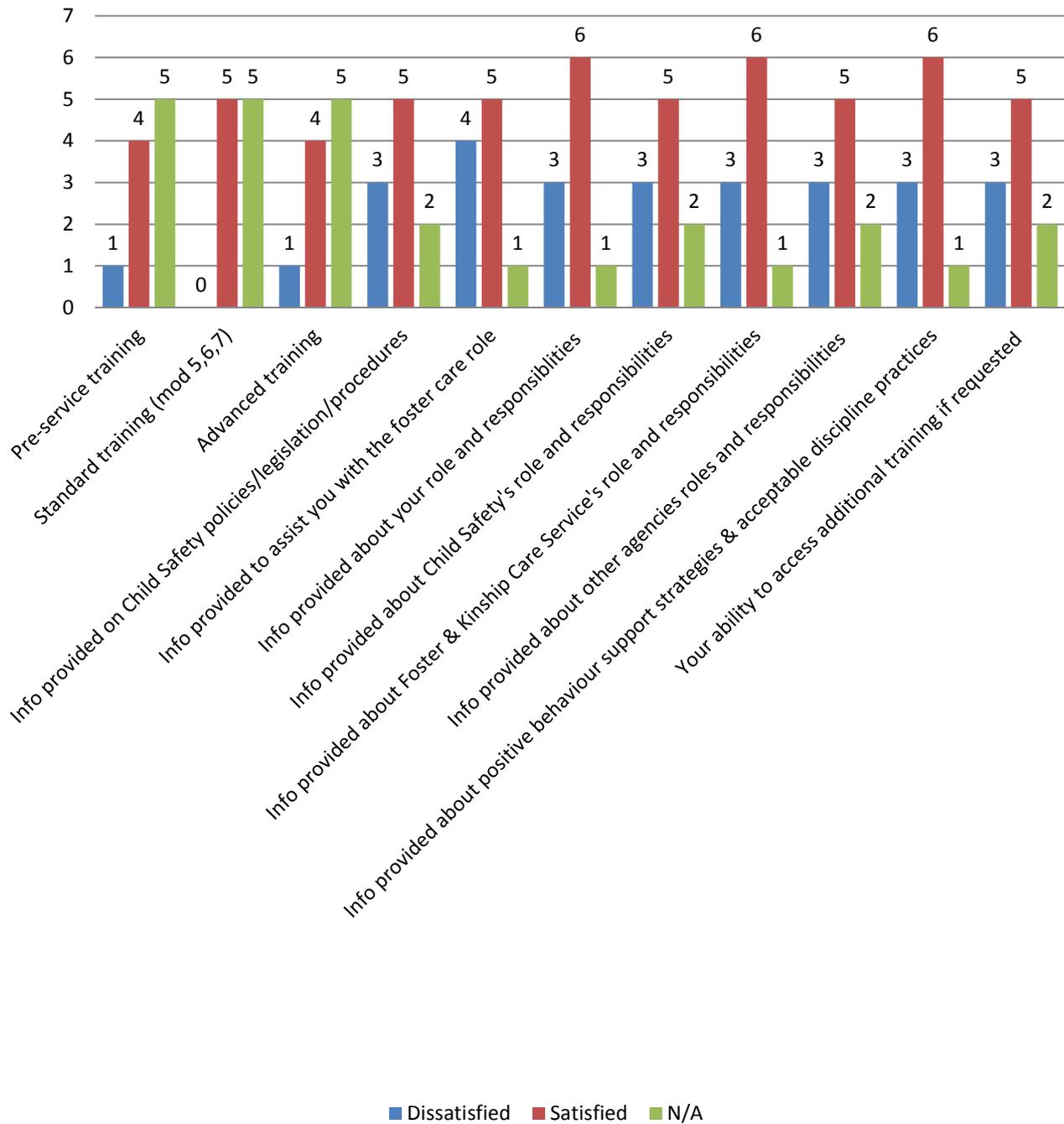


#### Responses from carers in relation to financial support:

- The actual cost of caring for a child in care outweighed the fortnight payments, especially when you have to pay for presents for the child to give parents, school fees, clothes, food, outings, and presents for the child, sporting events, camp and excursions at school. Book, personal care items, pocket money, dental care, medication, haircuts, birthday parties they attend, the list goes on

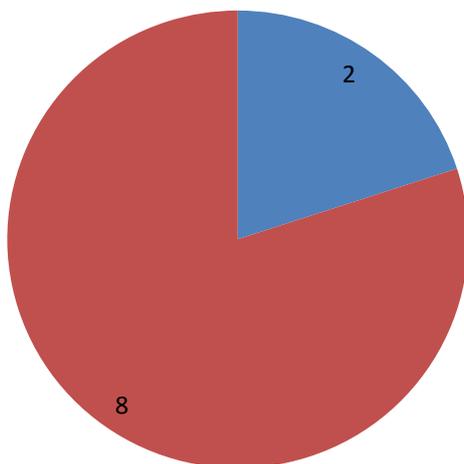
## The Experience of Caring: Training and Professional Development

**In regard to training and development, how satisfied were you with the following?**



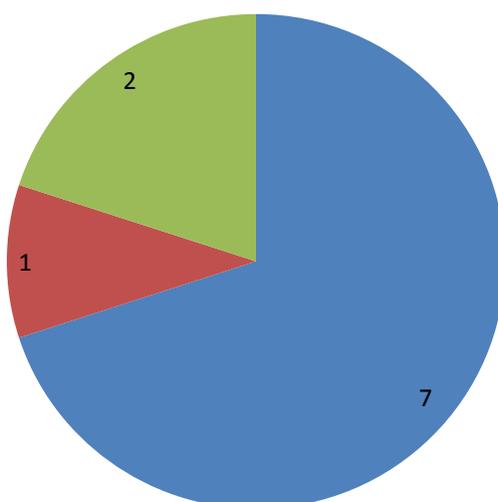
### Have you attended any training in the last 12 months

■ Yes ■ No

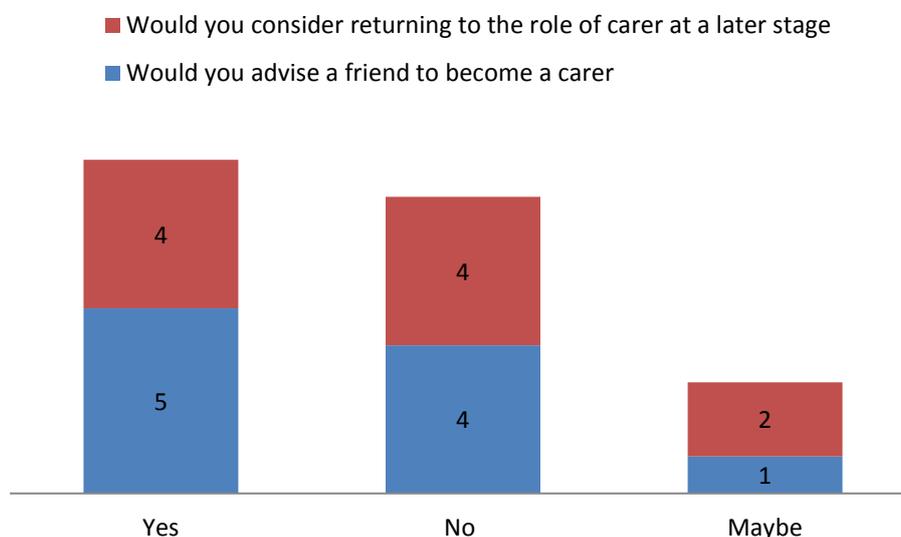


### If you were approved as a Foster Carer, was there a Foster Care Agreement in place?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



## Overall Experience



### Responses in relation to returning to the role as a carer at a later stage and advising a friend to become a carer:

- I was treated like crap the last 2 years of fostering and I would not recommend anyone to foster
- Just to learn more before entering into being a carer
- The way I was treated I gave 15 years to fostering and the only enjoyment I got out of it was seeing the big smiles on the children's faces when they spent time within my family
- Only if family member needed it

### Carers were asked to provide comments in relation to their overall experience as a carer, the responses were as follows:

#### 1. Did your experiences of providing care meet the expectation you had when you decided to become a carer?

- I only did fostering for the children, to make a difference in their lives and I think I did that over the 15 years I was a carer. But I will not be going back to fostering ever again, I still remain in contact with most of my kids I looked after

#### 2. What were the most challenging aspects of being a Carer?

- Interference of former foster family and Gypsy's twin sister
- Being ignored, treated as what I had to say wasn't important. The lack of communication was appalling. The fact that I was there to speak for the child didn't have any effect on their decision making. I was just there to care for a child and follow the rules that's it
- Returning the child to mother
- Constant family contact when she didn't want to reconcile
- None
- In the beginning not having the qualifications to handle damaged children

- Giving Gypsy 5 weeks of a calm supportive and caring environment. Having lots of fun together as a family. arranging Work experience for Gypsy

**3. What was the most positive aspect of being a Carer?**

- Seeing the children that came into my care, have a safe loving home. The smiles and confidence the children showed while in my care was positive. The hugs and laughs I got from them was also pleasing
- Providing love and stable care watching my grandson thrive in my care
- None
- Being able to love and care for my great granddaughter when she needed me most.
- There were good times

**4. What helped you feel supported in your role as a Carer?**

- The department and Churches of Christ
- My role as a carer and the support I received manly came from my own family and friends, I received little to no support from department people
- Mercy
- My kinship support person – Trish gave excellent practical advice
- Family Support Worker
- The Agencies always had my back and my family were also a wonderful support
- Key Assets

**5. What could be improved to assist Carers in their role?**

- Minimise influence of former foster family
- Treat carers as they matter, listen to them, help support the home situation, support the emotional side of the carer, just don't expect carers to ask for help. Reach out to carers and show them that they are appreciated in what they do to support young children in care
- Child Safety needs to listen to concerns re mother's mental health when child returns to mother
- More organised
- In my case nothing
- Be honest with all aspects of the child's history - omitting is wrong

**6. Do you have any additional comments, suggestions or concerns?**

- I enjoyed fostering a lot that is why I was a carer for 15 years, but the way I was treated at the end by my agency especially, was very unprofessional. Not given a choice, was the worst thing I experienced. The children in my care were absolutely beautiful and I love that side.
- Law should be changed to allow in-depth mental health assessment of mother or parent if child is removed from their care - asap!
- No
- No
- Lots of learning to be done before entering into fostering