

# 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**

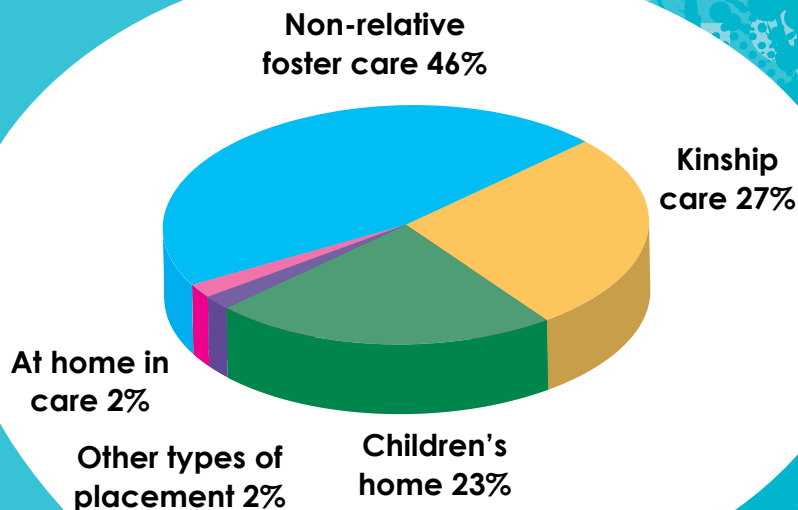
# WHO TOOK PART IN OUR LIFE IN CARE?

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.

[I] 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

Getting money to do hobbies and activities like other children

Get some privacy

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

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](http://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

