

Your Life, Your Care:

A survey of the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-18yrs in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT)

In February 2018 all children in care in RCT were asked to participate in an online survey, mainly through their schools and colleges. This is a summary of the findings.

146 children and young people responded to the survey: a response rate of 36% with boys slightly under-represented.

What is working well?



All (100%) young children (4-7yrs) felt settled where they lived. More young people (83%) reported feeling settled compared to looked after young people (73%) in other Welsh authorities.



Overall, 88% of children and young people reported that they felt safe in their placements 'all or most of the time': a larger proportion than the 75% of young people in the general population who felt safe in their homes.



More young people felt they could do the same things as their friends: 90% in RCT compared to 84% of looked after young people in other Welsh authorities.



School is a positive experience for most children. A larger proportion of children and young people (98%) felt that their carers were interested in their education compared to peers (90%) in the general population.

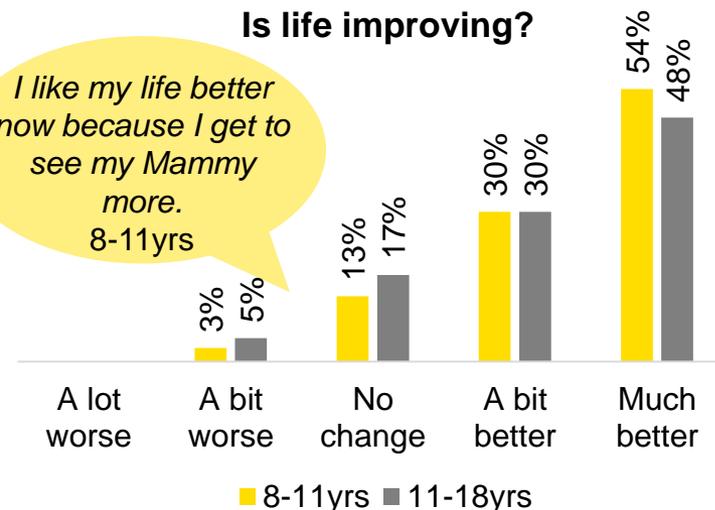


The proportion (75%) of children and young people (4-18yrs) who had a pet was higher than reported by children in the general population where 66% have a pet.



None of the youngest children (4-7yrs) gave responses which suggested low well-being.

Is life improving?



I like my life better now because I get to see my Mammy more.
8-11yrs

I think being in care is helpful and it has helped me to control my anger more and made me a better person. My carers helped me the most.
11-18yrs

Rydw i'n hapus gyda llawer o ffrindiau. I'm happy with lots of friends.
4-7yrs

What could be improved?



The majority of children and young people (4-18yrs) trusted their social workers, but young people emphasised that they disliked social workers changing.



Nearly all older children and young people (8-18yrs) knew who their social worker was and knew they could ask to speak to them alone. **A quarter** of the youngest children (4-7yrs) did not know who their social worker was.



Most children and young people (8-18yrs) felt included in social work decision-making, but **16%** of young people (11-18yrs) did not. Some young people wrote that they were not informed when decisions had been made.



Around **a quarter** of the children and young people wanted more contact with their mothers and siblings.



Although most children like school, **a third** of the older children and young people (8-18yrs) reported sometimes being afraid to go to school because of bullying; a larger proportion than children (**10%**) in the general population.

All 8-11yr old children were receiving help to prevent bullying, but only **67%** of those aged 11-18yrs received such help.

*Adults to do what they say
they will between my
meetings.
11-18yrs*

*I don't like it when
contact is
cancelled because
the taxi doesn't
come.
4-7yrs*

*Stop having so
many social
workers.
11-18yrs*

Compared to children in the general population more looked after young people reported:



Not having a good friend.

Talking less regularly with their carers about things that mattered.



Having fewer opportunities to explore the outdoors.



4 (11%) children aged **8-11yrs** and **12 (22%)** young people (**11-18yrs**) had low well-being scores.

Girls (11-18yrs) were significantly more likely than boys to:



Be unhappy with their appearance



Feel unsafe in placement



Not trust their carers



Think that their carers do not notice how they are feeling



Recommendations

- **Make sure that all social workers explain who they are.** Consider leaving child friendly information with children and young people about their social worker.
- **Work with children and young people to involve them in decisions.** Ensure that they are informed of when and why decisions are made about their care.
- **Explain to every child why they are in care and regularly review with children whether they would like more information.**
- **Continue to communicate with schools to identify and help children who feel bullied at school and those who feel that they do not have a good friend.** Remind schools to give children in care opportunities to be trusted.
- **Give carers further training in therapeutic parenting:** 44% of young people did not talk regularly to their carers/parents about things that mattered and nearly a third of young people with worries felt unsupported.
- **When reviewing children's opportunities to have fun/develop hobbies, consider not just organised activities but contact with nature.** Looked after children in RCT felt they had less opportunity to explore the outdoors than other children living in Wales.
- **Regularly review contact plans, taking into account children and young people's wishes and feelings.** Make sure that they understand the reasons for contact decisions.
- **Be aware of gender differences and provide opportunities for young people (11-18yrs) to build self-esteem and positive self-image.** Investigate why more girls than boys did not feel safe in their placements and had less positive relationships with carers.

bright spots

This survey was developed by Coram Voice and University of Bristol together with 140 children and young people in and from care as part of the national **Bright Spots programme**,

It asks children in care about their life, based on the things that are important to them.

To find out more go to:
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