

**Social Services Annual Consultation and
Qualitative Performance Measures Outcomes**



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Introduction

Social Services is committed to maintaining a quality assurance process which ensures continuous improvement. The quality of service is measured using information from various sources and is used to contribute to the overall quality assurance cycle. There are three discrete strands incorporated into the policy and quality assurance framework: Policy development, auditing of case records and consultation with citizens and their families. This report provides an overview of the consultation work with citizens and their families undertaken for 2017/8.

Consultation and the Experience of Citizens

As part of the Performance and Quality Assurance framework for Social Services, there is a rolling programme of consultation to explore satisfaction with information, care and support across Social Services. The consultation priorities plan (Appendix 2) sets out how all areas of Social Services are incorporated into the engagement process.

In 2016, the Welsh Government made it a requirement for social services performance to be measured under section 145 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The code sets out a performance measurement framework for local authorities in relation to their social services functions, it is intended to:

- enable people to understand the quality of social services and to make informed decisions about their care and support;
- reinforce local authorities' strategic planning to enable targeted resources and improvement activity;
- support local authorities to compare and benchmark their performance against others and learn and improve;
- promote the shift in service provision to support people and families to live independently;

In relation to this, the Policy and Quality Assurance Officer carries out a consultation exercise from 1st November to 31st March each year to obtain citizen's feedback about care and support.

As part of the Performance and Quality Assurance framework for Social Services, there is also a rolling programme of consultation to explore satisfaction with information, care and support across Social Services. Citizens using registered services are consulted annually, and those using other service areas are explored further to direction from senior management. The two main drivers for the planning of consultation are the corporate reporting mechanisms (service plan and self-assessment), and the Report of the Director of Social Services. These define the needs around consultation and engagement and how we ensure those needs are incorporated into the service and annual work plans.

Service area Consultation Outcomes

In 2017/18, the following service areas were explored;

Residential

As part of our commitment to the continued improvement of our provider services and to meet the requirements of the Care Standards Act (2000), service user and carer's views regarding the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Residential Service have been sought on an annual basis since 2006. The Policy and Quality Assurance Officer interviewed a sample of residents of the Vale of Glamorgan Council Residential Homes and their carers. Carers and relatives were also sent a questionnaire.

Vale Community Resource Service (VCRS)

The Community Resource Service was asked, on a monthly basis, to provide details of citizens who had received care and support from them. These citizens were independent once discharged from the service, and were identified as being able to fill in the questionnaire themselves or with family support. They were sent a Performance Measures questionnaire; however service-specific questions were developed in addition for local performance information. These are therefore considered as part of the Performance Measures outcomes section of the annual report.

Fostering

Foster carers who attended the Foster Carer Forum were consulted about how best to engage both carers and the young people placed with them. The foster carer questionnaire was also used as the basis for a focus group discussion with the attendees of the forum. Questionnaires that were previously used were updated to reflect any changes in the service since the previous exercise; for example the restructure of the teams. Two questionnaires were developed.

Flying Start

As part of Social Services' quality assurance process, the Policy and Quality Assurance Officer worked with staff of Flying Start to consult parents who had received general support to ascertain views about their experience with all areas of flying start. At the start of the spring, summer and autumn terms of 2017, questionnaires were sent to parents who were new to the service at this stage. The parents consulted had a child who had had contact with Flying Start and who had reached the age of two. The questionnaire was developed then circulated to a focus group to ascertain views about the questions. As a result some further changes were made before it was sent out to service users.

Families First Information Line

All families who contacted the Families First Information Line between 1st November and 31st March were contacted with a questionnaire developed with the manager of the FACT Service (Families Achieving Change Together).

Adult Placement Service

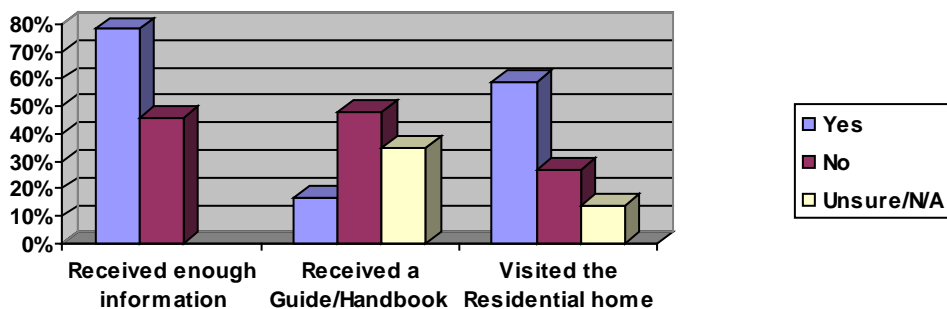
Both citizens placed with host families and hosts who had been recently approved (within 12 months of the consultation) were consulted as well as those who had been approved for a longer period. This was to give an idea of views about the initial information that is available. A paper and electronic version of the questionnaire was used to seek views. Hosts were contacted via the electronic questionnaire (where e-mail addresses had been provided) to ascertain their own views of the service in terms of advice and support they may have received as well as aspects of matching and supervision.

Outcomes are presented thematically, so that areas of learning can be shared across the services.

Information Provision

For Residential Services, figure 1 highlights views about information provision.

Figure 1

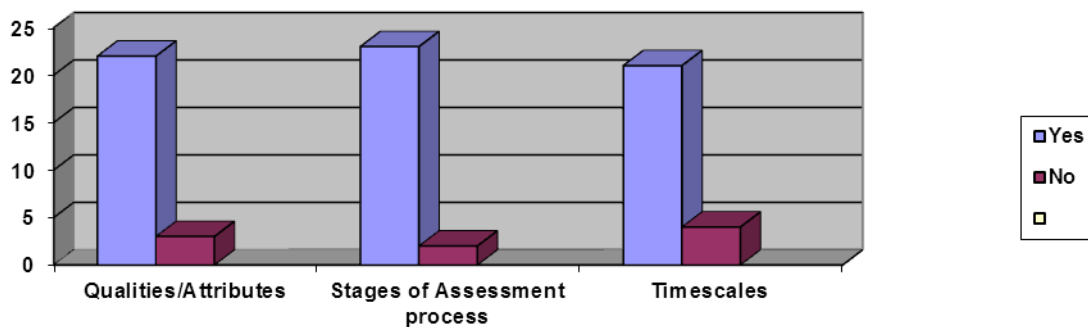


Although most residents felt they knew enough, although some would have liked more verbal information. Others had an emergency admission so would not have had chance to obtain information or visit before moving in. Many could not recall receiving a guide or a handbook before moving in. Where people had visited the residential home, they found this very useful and it was a good source of information.

For the Vale Community Resource Services (VCRS), citizens felt that they had the right information and advice when they required, and that carers had been helpful.

During the assessment process for the Fostering Service, potential foster carers are advised about various aspects of fostering. These are: “qualities/attributes required to be approved”, “the stages of the assessment process” and “timescales” of the process. Figure 2 below shows the number of respondents who confirmed they had received this information:

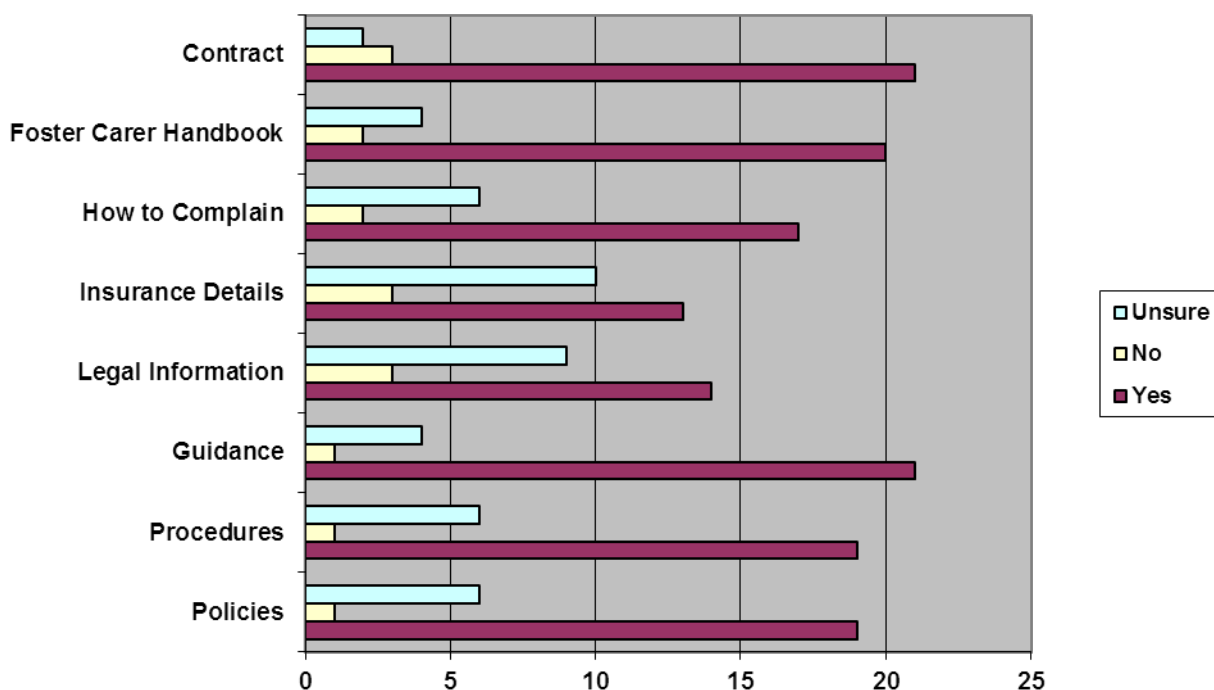
Figure 2



Nearly all who responded confirmed that they were asked to provide two referees. Nearly all also confirmed that they were asked for an enhanced disclosure certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Foster carers were asked whether, on approval they were given specific information. Figure 3 below shows the numbers of respondents in each category.

Figure 3



Almost all of respondents felt that they received information about Flying Start at the right time suitable for their needs and tailored to their circumstances. They also felt that the staff who visited were experienced and knowledgeable about their situation. Information was described as useful to grandparents as well as parents and is clearly aimed at all family members.

Nearly all felt that they received the right amount of information. A small proportion did not think they received enough (5%). One person said they would have preferred information a

bit sooner, however in general parents have felt they were kept informed of support options regularly.

Flying Start staff have been helpful and informative to parents. Moreover the information has been user friendly and easy to understand. This is particularly appreciated for new parents and those who are new to the Flying Start area.

Many citizens said they had had the right information or advice from the Families First Information Line when they required, and one commented “always”. Respondents felt that explanations were given about how the service could help, and time was taken to explain further support and provide reassurance. Families appreciated being listened to. All respondents said they were able to communicate in their preferred language. Parents were advised about what was available in their area and how to access this. When people did not take up the service, they were signposted.

Citizens felt that the verbal information provided by the Adult Placement service provided a clear understanding of how the service can help them. Three quarters said they were satisfied with the information they received before they started living / staying with the host family. Hosts also found the information very clear, and felt that it was helpful for them and the citizen. Verbal information in particular was considered useful. Nearly all hosts said that they had received a copy of the Adult Placement Service Guide.

Information provision has generally been a positive experience for citizens and their families. Services have been receptive to choices about information formats, and staff have been informative and helpful across services.

Services and Support

For Residential Service, nearly all said the staff made them feel welcome when they moved into the home and there were some very positive comments regarding the staff. Residents were encouraged to join in with activities and where there are faith needs, most confirmed that the home provided them with the opportunities to express them (e.g. church transport, prayer, dietary requirements). Nearly all carers/relatives (95%) felt that the resident is able to choose whether or not they spend time with others.

Where food is provided, interviews suggested the variety and quality of food was good. Nearly all residential service users felt encouraged to do things for themselves if they were able and where people could do things, many felt the staff would help if they did need it. In Residential Service settings, most respondents (all but one in many cases) rated the support from staff very positively indeed. People often commented about the lack of time staff had to interact with residents but they appreciated the time staff did spend with them and other residents. They were also happy that staff would be there if they were needed. Many described the peace of mind they felt living at the residential home and having company was a source of comfort to many residents.

For VCRS, citizens said they were encouraged and supported to do as much as they could when they felt ready. In some cases this took time, but the staff encouraged them and took their time. Staff carried out tasks in the service delivery plan and nearly all found the service reliable. In nearly all cases the support received assisted citizens to keep or improve their independence. Nearly all said they had been treated with dignity and respect. The carers were patient, took their time and were very supportive and helpful throughout the service.

Respondents felt that the service catered for all their needs. Many felt it was nice to see familiar faces providing their care.

The consultation with Foster carers identified high levels of satisfaction with the assessment and approval process. The consultation also identified that nearly all respondents were 'quite satisfied' with the matching process. Generally there was a satisfactory level of involvement of key people and carers felt that elements such as their culture, religion, race and disability had all been taken into account during the matching process. There was a high level of satisfaction with the training available and that carers needs are taken into account as part of supervision. In relation to training, respondents generally felt that the courses were relevant to their needs with many indicating they are satisfied with most aspects of the training. The consultation highlighted that the frequency of supervision varied in some cases, but most received regular supervision and most said this was with the same Social Worker. However not all respondents felt that supervision addressed their issues of concern for them or the service. Roles within the Fostering Service appear to be transparent to foster carers, as respondents reported feeling they had access to most aspects of support. Despite some comments about lack of response to queries and lack of support in some instance, most carers felt satisfied with their Fostering Social Worker.

For the Flying Start Service, the support provided has helped parents to be more confident, and also having knowledgeable and supportive staff at the various settings has been very much appreciated. Childcare has been a very good support to many parents both in terms of time and financial aspects. In some cases children have had the opportunity to interact with others which they felt has been good for their development, and also establishing a routine. In cases where parents have had issues with their mental health or family relationships, the service has provided invaluable support and families are very grateful.

Citizens who had been involved via the Families First Information Line found the initial call good, describing it as "really helpful and positive". Nearly all who responded felt they have had the support they needed from the advice line. People who had support felt reassured about how the service could help them, and felt included in any decision making, although one felt their options were limited. All felt that the worker listened to their concerns and views. There were very positive views about the professionals who visited the service users after the initial phone call. Some felt that the support they have had so far has met expectations. People found home visits informative and helpful, and were made to feel at ease by the visiting worker.

For Adult Placement citizens and hosts, there was very high level of satisfaction with the identification of a suitable match. Citizens were also very satisfied with where they lived and felt welcome when they moved in. Most citizens feel they are kept informed by the service and both citizens and hosts have a good level of involvement with the service. All of the respondent groups expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Adult Placement Service overall. The prompt response of the Adult Placement Service at times of need was appreciated and where there have been any issues, these were addressed. Any complaints made were not directly related to the service provision but had still been addressed.

Responses across the service were in general very positive, with some useful suggestions for improvement.

These are highlighted below:

- Receiving follow up to contact made to social workers.

- Having the same social worker during their involvement with Social Services as some people have found they have had frequent changes of social worker.
- Consult with citizens and carers more about changes to services.
- Clearer explanation of the roles of professionals.
- Clearer explanation of what different meetings are for and why they are held.
- Any delays to service to be explained so that citizens understand the process more clearly.

Welsh Government Performance Measures 2017-2018

Methodology

Questionnaires developed by Welsh Government were sent to a sample of all adults and carers with a Care and Support Plan, to all children and young people with a care and support plan and their parents (if involved with the service), and unpaid carers who had received a carers assessment as at November 2017. All were sent paper questionnaires and prepaid return envelopes. Interviews were carried out where appropriate via telephone or face to face. Questionnaires were developed in both English and Welsh, and Easy Read versions were available for each service user group.

85 Adults who received support and were independent when discharged from the VCRS were sent a questionnaire between December 2017 and March 2018. Additional questions were added to make the questionnaire more service specific to VCRS, and included in the annual service area consultation.

Overall 1,980 questionnaires were circulated to services users with 643 returns, representing a 32.5% response rate. The questionnaires were analysed by citizen groups for the purposes of our own service development. These groups include children and young people, parents, adults, adults who responded to the easy read questionnaire, carers, and adults who have received support from the Community Resource Team. Outlined below is a summary of the key findings from this consultation in relation to these groups as at 31st March 2018.

Consultation with Adults

Respondents

A total of 493 responded to the Adults questionnaires and 31 people responded to the Easy Read questionnaire developed for adults with a learning disability. 50 people responded via a face to face interview and a further two via a telephone interview.

The largest proportion of respondents were over 85 (35%), and then between 65 and 84 years (32%). 31% were aged between 25 and 64 and 3% between 18 and 24 years of age. Below are the responses to each question in the Adults' questionnaire and interview.

Your Life at the Moment

Figure 4

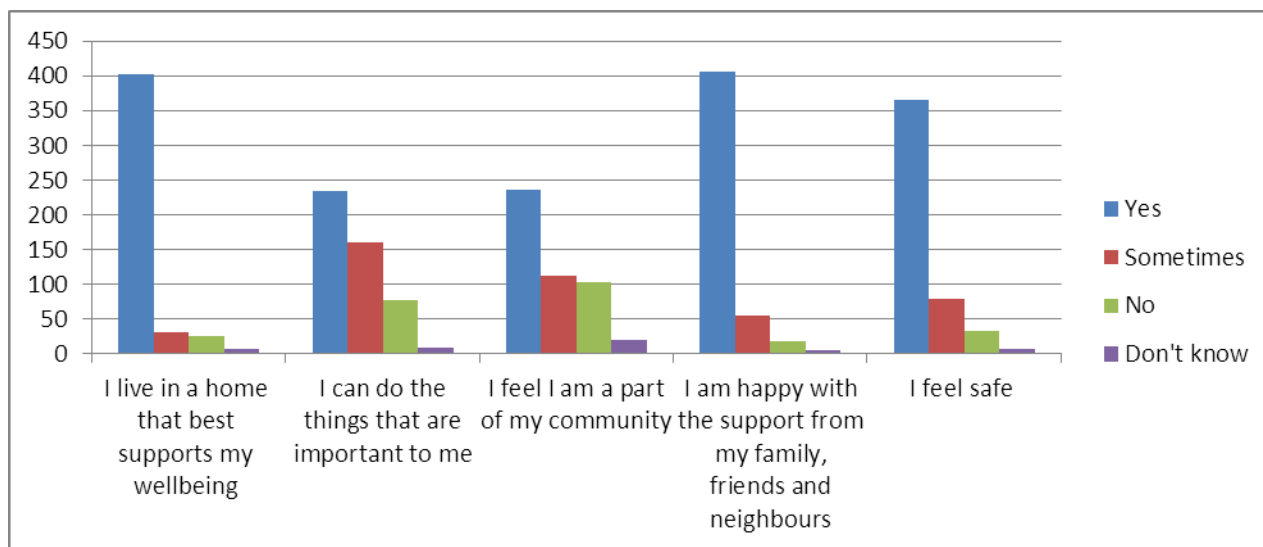


Figure 4 illustrates that 86% feel they live in a home that best supports their well-being. Many had received adaptations to their home which made their lives easier. In places where respondents were renting, some had issues that the landlord needed to address. Others can currently manage in their own home with support.

Nearly 50% felt they could do the things that are important to them. Many commented that they can as long as they are supported. Some could not do things they used to do, but can still do things that are important, such as see family and friends and visit places they like to see. 34% said “sometimes” because they now struggle to do some of the things they used to. Also, many people had access issues when out and about such as wheelchair ramps. Many people had considerable physical limitations and are reliant on carers.

Just over half felt part of their community as they have a lot of support to get out and socialise. Many have a lot of friends around them, and enjoy talking to people where they attend day centres. Some have difficulty getting out and about and also felt there are limited activities in the community for disabled people. Some feel very isolated and unable to get out, again mainly due to disability. Some are looking after their relative so are unable to leave the house. Others are not interested in attending social clubs or classes available. Most respondents felt happy with the support they receive from their neighbours, friends and family, but many could not cope without help they get from others. A lot had support from immediate family and friends. Just over three quarters said they felt safe but some did not, mainly because they have mobility issues and were afraid of falling. In some cases, people have experienced violence and aggression near where they live so feel vulnerable.

79% said they know who to speak to about their care and support. Nearly three quarters of respondents said they have had the right information or advice when they needed it. This came from staff at the settings they attend and from Social Services, however some people commented about a lack of communication,

Over three quarters of respondents (79%) said they felt actively involved in decisions about how their care and support was provided. People reported being asked for their views, and have been involved in care planning meetings.

Your Care and Support

Nearly all (91%) said they were treated with dignity and respect. They provided very positive comments about care staff and social workers. In addition, 85% said they were happy with the care and support they have received. Many had very positive comments about staff and the settings that they attend. Many said how much they appreciated the support they receive from both family and care staff.

All respondents aged between 18 and 24 were asked whether they had received information and advice that will prepare them for adulthood. 63% said they had, and five (31%) said “sometimes”.

When asked what Social Services did well, many citizens were very happy with the settings they attend and the opportunities that they have had as a result. Respondents have been listened to and given advice when they required it and where applicable, they are happy with the adaptations they have had to their home.

When asked what Social Services could have done better, many said there was nothing to improve, and that they are happy with the service they have so far received. Some suggested to improve communication between departments, and to have more contact from social workers. Others commented that there have been some delays in responding to queries. Where people have received advice, some would have preferred simpler language that was easier to understand.

Performance Measures

Consultation with Children and Parents

Parents' Questionnaire

Respondents

Of the 438 parents who were sent a questionnaire, 27 responded (6%). 103 parents who were sent a questionnaire were male, and 335 were female. Of the respondents, five were male and 22 were female.

Most of the parents who responded (22) felt they have been actively involved with the care and support their child has received, and the remaining four said “sometimes”. Comments were very positive. One was very satisfied with the support for their family. Two parents agreed with the decisions made by Social Services, but sometimes not. All but two of the parents either agreed that their social worker listens to them in a way that shows they really want to understand their family.

All apart from one of 26 respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their social worker does what they say they will do. 23 parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their social worker notices what's working well in their family regarding the care, safety and wellbeing of their child. Two however did not agree. One parent did not feel that their social worker has been clear about how they see the concerns about their family situation. Four neither agreed nor disagreed, however ten did agree and the remaining nine strongly agreed. This highlights the need for information and advice from the social worker to be clear and tailored to the family. Eleven felt that their social worker and they agree on what

they are concerned about and the remaining seven “strongly agreed”. Similarly all agreed (two strongly agreed) that they have felt involved in making plans about what to do. This is important because it highlights that parents and staff in social services are working together to achieve the same objective.

The majority of parents who responded felt that their social worker has spent time with their children and listened to what they say about the problems and what should happen with their situation. Four disagreed and one neither agreed nor disagreed. 15 parents agreed that their social worker has made sure their child fully understood what is being done to help them. Two neither agreed nor disagreed, and three disagreed. Overall, this suggests that parents feel social workers are highlighting and reiterating the plans for supporting them, and ensuring they understand why Social Services are involved.

Nearly all agreed or strongly agreed that their social worker cares that they solve their problems; this suggests that parents feel that the social worker is committed to working towards solutions with the family.

Parents were asked “If you could change one thing about how your worker is working with you, what would it be?” One parent felt that nothing should change as the social worker is doing a good job with the support provided. Others made the following suggestions;

- Make contact with families more regularly to discuss how things are progressing.
- Contact agencies when agreed and follow these up where there is no response.
- Improve communication between families and social workers – some parents have experienced difficulties in contacting their social worker, and others have not had timely responses to calls or messages.
- Improve consistency and continuity with social workers. Parents feel that their child’s social workers can change too often, meaning that they frequently have to become familiar with new social workers.
- Give social workers more autonomy to make decisions about the level of care required.

Parents were asked what they felt Social Services had done well, and many gave examples.

In one case the parents felt that the social worker was very efficient in arranging direct payments for the family and also providing something that would benefit the parent as a carer. Parents felt that it was helpful that the social worker asked them what they can do for them and listened to their concerns. Social workers were “helpful, clear, approachable and pleasant”, showing concern and support for their child’s future. Communication was helpful in one case, and in others, the social worker had written very supportive letters to help the family. Information and signposting was considered something that the social worker had done well. Provision of services such as short breaks was also appreciated.

When asked what Social Services could do to improve, the following suggestions were made;

- Concerns raised about social worker’s support to be taken seriously and ensure things improve if parents are unhappy with the support they receive.
- Shorter gaps between visits/contacts.
- Professionals to familiarise themselves about the case before meetings.
- More childcare provision, Special Educational Needs support and overnight respite.

Parents were asked whether there was anything else they would like to tell us about the support they receive, and many said they were very grateful. One parent explained that they have had the same social worker for a very long time and are very happy with this person. One person explained that their social worker had always been in the background yet there for the child when necessary. Another had found their social worker very easy to talk to, and they feel they are on the same page. Despite this, one parent said that their social worker was only at their home once for a short period so they were unable to answer most questions. Another felt they were still waiting for something positive to come from Social Services being involved with their family.

Overall parents' experiences are positive, with social workers being seen as supportive and helpful through challenging times for the family. It has been acknowledged that where the social worker may not have been able to help, this was mostly out of their control. Social workers appear to be involved the whole family in meetings and have provided clear advice to families. Future service provision needs to take into account difficulties in contacting social workers, and to ensure that agencies are followed up where necessary. In addition, there needs to be more consistency in social workers' involvement for children, however recruitment remains a challenge. In most cases parents feel that social workers have done as much as they can to support their family without judgement.

Consultation with Young People

Questionnaires were developed for young people between the ages of 7 and 17 years, and an "easy read" version was also developed for those with a learning disability. Of the 250 questionnaires sent, 26 young people responded, giving a 10% response rate. A higher proportion of females responded and a higher proportion of those aged between 7 and 14 responded.

Your Life at the Moment

Figure 5

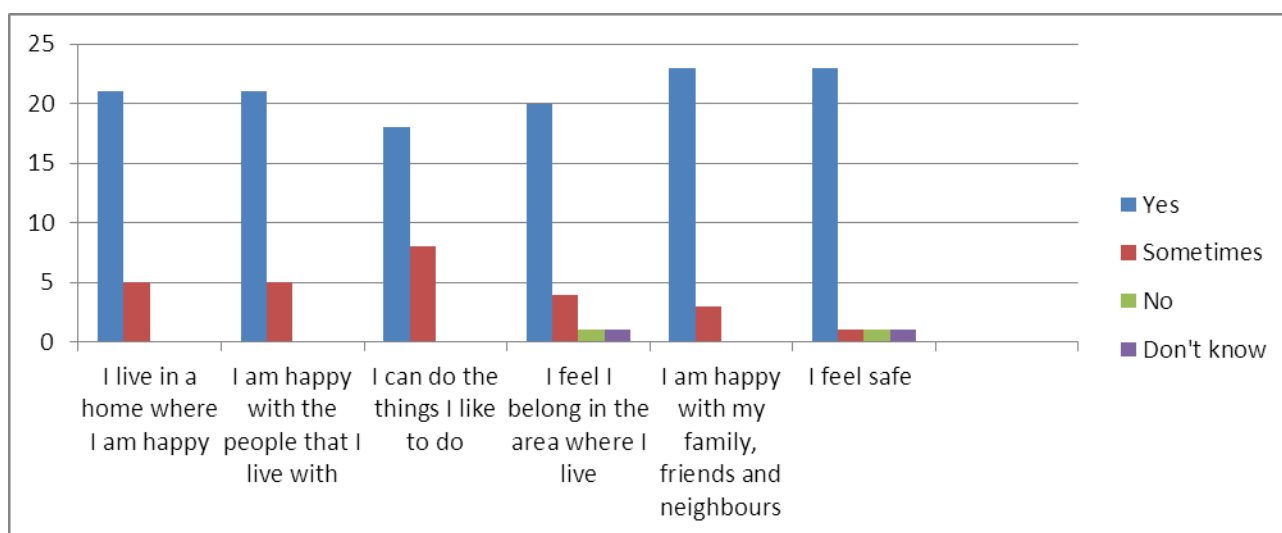


Figure 5 highlights 21 young people said they live in a home where they are happy, and five said "sometimes". One person said their home feels more homely as they are treated like a family member although one would be happier if they were with their own family. The same proportion said they are happy with the people they live with. One young person would not be anywhere else and feel comfortable.

18 young people said they could do the things they like to do. Eight said “sometimes”. One felt they could ask with confidence about going out with their friends. Similarly some are able to have friends around. Also they are able to go out as long as their foster carer knows where they are. Young people feel able to continue with hobbies and appear to feel supported by their families and carers to do this.

20 young people said they felt they belong in the area where they live. Four said “sometimes”, one person said “no” and one did not know. One young person was unsure about whether their situation is permanent or temporary. Another young person said that everyone in the area is welcoming and supportive but one felt they did not because they are used to their home town. Similarly another said they did feel they belong, however when they leave care they want to go back to their home town. Another said that although their family is welcoming, the people in their neighbourhood are not as friendly any more.

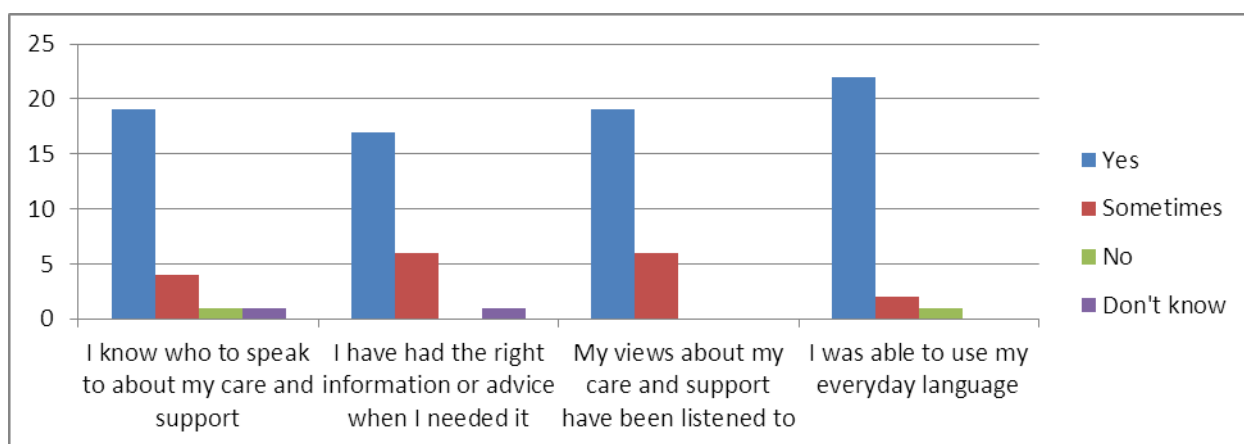
23 young people are happy with their family, friends and neighbours, and three said “sometimes”. Although one person did not know most of their neighbours, another described their family, friends and neighbours as “lovely.” Another sees their family on weekends and school holidays, and they get on with their neighbours as well. One commented “my friends and family always make me smile”.

23 young people feel safe. One said “sometimes”, another said “no” and one did not know. One said they know they can always speak to somebody, and another said their foster carer always makes sure they are safe and cared for at all times. One commented that they know that they are always looked after and kept safe.

Young people were then asked to think about the care and support they received. Figure 6 below indicates the responses received.

Your Care and Support

Figure 6



19 people said they knew who to speak to about their care and support and four said “sometimes”. Examples were teachers at school, family, friends, foster carers and their social worker. One person said their social worker did not always turn up to see them. One said “no” and one did not know.

Nearly three quarters (17 young people) felt they had received the right information or advice when they needed it. One commented that they had always been given good honest advice. One person said that they had received a more in depth explanation from their

foster carer. In another case the social worker had provided inaccurate information about contact with a family member. One person said they would like to have more information about their sibling who had been adopted.

19 people felt their views about their care and support have been listened to. Six felt this was “sometimes” the case. One felt that their carer and their social worker always listen to them. One felt that they have been listened to more often lately. One person commented that sometimes they could be listened to more, for example about contact.

All but one has been able to use their preferred language when they received care and support. 23 young people felt they had been treated with respect and two said “sometimes”. 23 young people felt happy with the care and support they have had. One said “sometimes”, another said “no” and one did not know. One felt that that support has provided them with the tools and life skills needed. One commented “most of the time” and one did say they felt unhappy with the support from their social worker.

Of those who are 16 or 17 years of age (8 respondents), five felt that they have had advice, help and support that will prepare them for adulthood. One said “sometimes”, one said “no” and one did not know. One commented that they did not really want to look that far ahead into the future. Another commented that they feel future and life plans should start at 13. Advice, help and support had been provided by doctors, hospital, foster carers, their family and their school. All respondents felt that people want what is best for them, two respondents said “sometimes”. None could recall having been told about children’s rights. Nearly all felt that people want what is best for them. One said their support had “brought me to the best foster carer ever”.

Young people were asked what they felt Social Services had done well. Young people provided many positive comments and seemed to be satisfied with the care and support they have received. Many felt that being placed with their foster carers was positive, and some commented that their social worker was very supportive, for example with life story work. Having someone to ensure they receive the right support was helpful, as was having someone to explain things to them when necessary. Finding the right foster carers was something many young people appreciated, as was arranging contact.

The areas of improvement related to improving stability of social workers (not changing social workers), access to more information, being listened to more and having more contact with their family. Children and Young People Services recognise the importance of continuity of Social Workers for children and young people and are developing proposals to both amend the structure of teams and to achieve a permanent workforce in all areas.

Consultation with Carers

Methodology

Questionnaires were developed by Welsh Government and sent to all carers who have received a carer’s assessment as at 1st November 2017. The report explores the views of those who were identified as an informal carer at this time and presents their responses.

Respondents

Of 126 questionnaires sent, 26 carers responded (21%). Just over half of the respondents were female (56%), and just over half (52%) were aged between 65-84 years.

Your Life as a Carer

Figure 7

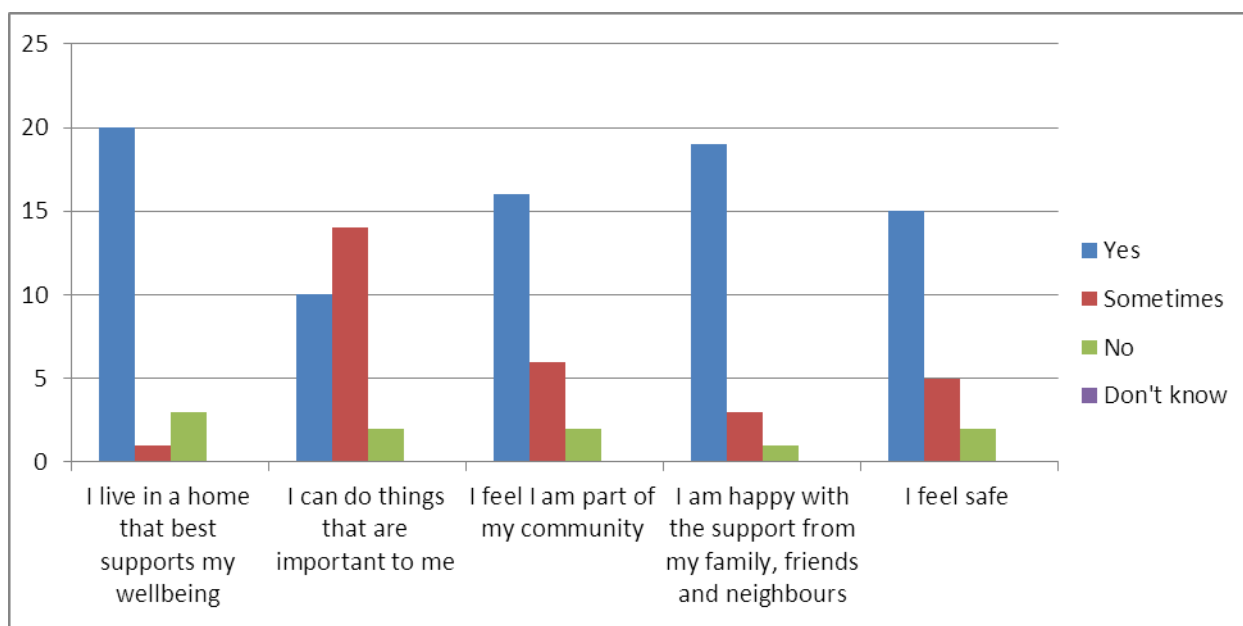
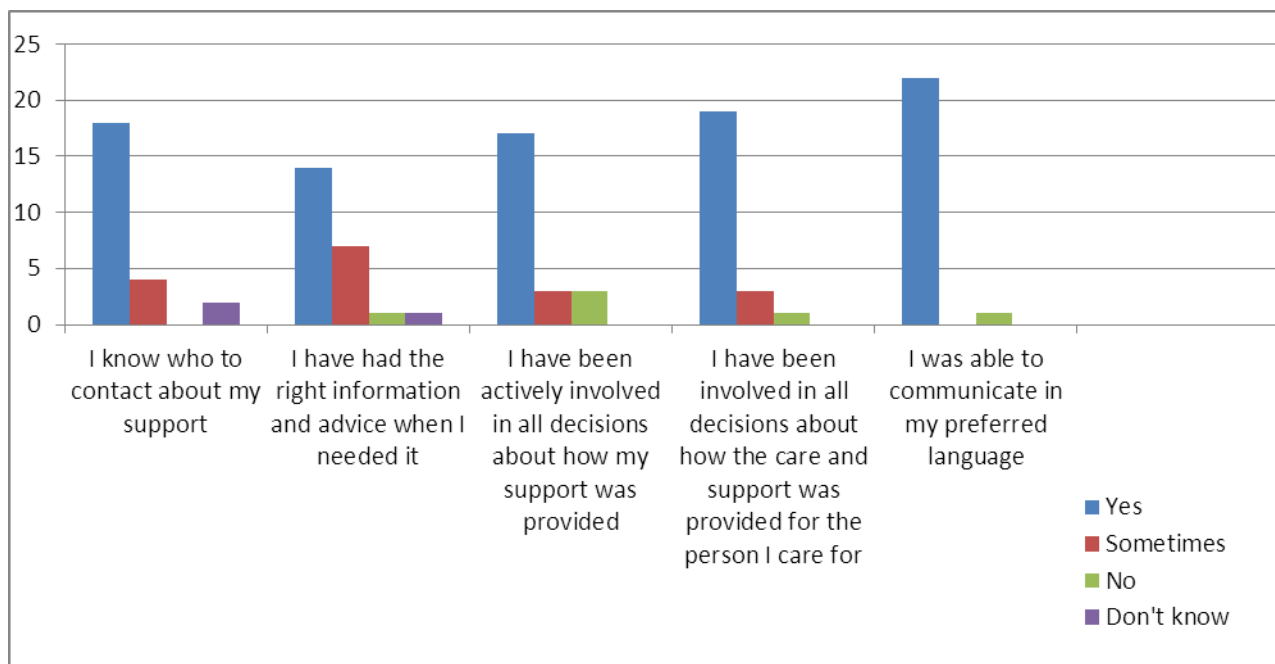


Figure 7 illustrates that 20 carers said they live in a home that best supports their wellbeing. One said “sometimes”. Three said “no”. Any issues were mainly regarding mobility and access.

Just over a third of carers felt they can do the things that are important to them, however over half said they could “sometimes”. Many require respite for the person they care for before they can do things that are important to them. Some carers support people with significant needs which make it difficult to do things that are important to them. Most (16) say they feel part of their community; and six carers said “sometimes”, however some feel that caring takes up much of their time so they cannot integrate with their community. As Figure 7 shows, most (19 carers) said they are happy with the support they receive from friends, family and neighbours”. Three said “sometimes” and one carer said “no”. They receive support from family when they need it. Some said they have supportive children and siblings. Most carers (15) said they feel safe, and five said “sometimes”. Two did not, mainly due to mobility issues of their own.

Your Support as a Carer

Figure 8



Nearly three quarters (18) of the respondents said they know who to contact about their care and support. Four said “sometimes” and two did not know. One said it was sometimes difficult to make contact and another has contacted C1V as they have not had a named social worker for the past six months.

14 carers have received the right information and advice when needed, and seven said “sometimes”. One said “no” and one did not know. One carer had received advice from the Council or their GP, however one carer said that all information they had received had been incorrect and they had received no advice. Most (17) carers feel involved in decisions about how their support was provided, three said “sometimes” and three said “no”. One felt that decisions have been made by Social Services without conversation or consent. Another said that their carers assessment took some time as there were so many others before they received one.

19 carers feel they have been involved in all decisions about how the care and support was provided for the person they care for. Three said “sometimes” and one said “no”. One carer commented that although sometimes they felt involved, they were never listened to and a lot of meetings have taken place without them or the person they care for present. One said they have not been involved, however explained that this was not to do with Social Services.

All respondents apart from one said they were able to communicate in their preferred language. 23 carers felt they have been treated with dignity and respect, however three said “no”. One explained that they felt they had been spoken to quite badly. Another had not been treated with dignity and respect by the hospital.

Most carers (15) felt supported to continue in their caring role, while six said “sometimes”. Two said “no” and two did not know. Carers themselves have their own health issues, so found it difficult to carry out their caring role. Others found it difficult emotionally.

Nearly all are happy with the support they have had, however three were not. Comments were provided about how good the social workers are, very supportive and professional. Another said they found their carer’s assessment was very valuable to them. Some had received support from other agencies but others felt drained and were struggling with their own health.

16 carers felt that they can find time to look after their own health and wellbeing (for example, eating right or getting enough sleep). Five said “sometimes” and four carers said “no”. In many cases, the person they care for needs support most of the time, which in turn prevents them having time for themselves.

When asked what Social Services had done well, many felt that they had received help and respite when they needed it. They do not feel so isolated when services are there to support them and communication was good.

When asked what Social Services could do better, some carers felt that communication to carers and between departments could be improved, and also being able to contact the right department. Another felt that the service should be more reactive and provide assistance more quickly when a critical situation arises. Some respondents felt nothing could be improved, and were happy with the support to help them fulfil their caring duties.

Improvement Cycle

A fundamental principle of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, is to encourage individuals to be more involved in the design and delivery of services. Through our service user consultation we aim to provide the feedback to relevant service areas and teams to utilise in their design and delivery of services. Outcomes of consultations are discussed with Operational and Team Managers and in turn with teams through action plans. The Policy and Quality Assurance Officer attends directorate managers meetings to feedback outcomes of consultation and engagement processes to ensure that there is a whole service approach to the consideration of findings.

Engagement Plans

We continuously explore ways we can involve our service users in helping to shape our services. For example, within Children and Young People Services, the 15 Plus Team has developed a Young People’s Forum bringing care leavers together to inform service delivery. One of the recent developments has involved young people and care leavers in the recruitment of social workers and social work managers via a young people’s panel. The young people prepared, asked and scored their own questions which formed part of the formal evaluation process. The Division has made a commitment that all interviews for social work staff will involve young people.

The quality assurance officer has been involved in facilitating these interviews and will continue to do so throughout 2018/9.

Working Across the Authority

Citizen Engagement

In order to strengthen and support citizen engagement and focus groups across the region, and to meet our duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, the Sustainable Social Services Regional Steering Group has established a work stream.

To ensure the region undertakes effective engagement activities with citizens shaping service delivery, an 'Experts by Experience' pilot was undertaken during 2017-18 with New Horizon's Day Services in the Vale. In order to take forward the lessons learnt from the pilot, the work stream is now in the process of developing an engagement project to strengthen citizen engagement for a variety of Directorate annual reports.

The Policy and Quality Assurance officer is also working with the Regional Safeguarding Children Subgroup to establish a consultation exercise for young people who have experienced the child protection process.

Social Services is working in partnership with Corporate Performance so that information from engagement processes can inform our annual reporting mechanisms to effectively demonstrate how citizens are shaping our services.