



# **Your Life, Your Care:** *a survey of the views of looked after children and young people aged 4-18yrs in Southampton*

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# About this research

## Bright Spots

This research is part of the Bright Spots programme: a partnership between the University of Bristol and Coram Voice.

The programme aims to:

- improve the care experience for all looked after children;
- give children a voice on their own well-being; and
- highlight the 'Bright Spots' of practice that contribute to children flourishing in care.

The project was funded by the Hadley Trust and the DfE Social Care Innovation Fund.

- Through the programme we developed the *Bright Spots Well-Being Indicators*, which put children's experience and voices at the heart of how we measure subjective well-being.
- The indicators are measured by the '*Your Life, Your Care*' survey – a tool grounded in research and comparable to national data sets.
- The survey was developed from literature reviews, roundtable discussions with professionals and from focus groups and individual interviews with 140 looked after children and young people living in nine different local authorities.
- The survey identifies the areas where children appear to be flourishing and where things could be improved, providing an evidence base of children's experience and well-being to inform service improvements.

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# **Section 1: Summary: Key Findings**

# Key findings

- The survey was completed by 245 children and young people. The response rate was 83%. More than four in five looked after children and young people in Southampton were supported to have their views heard: more than 3 times the response rate (26%) last year.
- Given the large increase in sample size, comparisons between last year's and this year's survey should be treated with caution.



The majority (83%) of children and young people felt their lives were improving.



Almost all children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) had a trusted adult in their lives.

## Placements and carers



- Children and young people in Southampton appeared happy and settled in their placements.
- The vast majority trusted their carers and liked their bedrooms.
- Several children and young people used the text comments to say how much they liked their carers.
- However, one in five of the youngest did not feel the people they lived with noticed how they were feeling



# Key findings (2)



## Social workers

- Overall 88% of children and young people in Southampton knew who their social worker was.
- Compared to last year, there had been an improvement in the proportion of children and young people who know their social worker.
- However, 19% of children aged 4-7yrs still did not know the identity of their social worker
- The majority of children and young people trusted their social worker, although a lower proportion in the older age group (11-18) trusted their social worker compared to the younger children.



The majority of children (89%) and young people (87%) felt included in decisions made about their lives.



## Family time

- 39% of children and 44% of young people saw their mothers 'just the right amount' and around half were happy with contact arrangements with siblings.
- The majority of text comments were about wanting more contact with family members.
- 18 (24%) children (8-11yrs) and 20 (19%) young people (11-18yrs) had no face to face contact with either parent.

# Key findings (3)

## Bullying

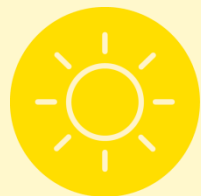


- 21 children and 22 young people reported that they were afraid to go to school because of bullying.



- All but five (12%) children and young people felt that they were supported with dealing with bullying, an improvement since last year.

# Key findings (4)



On the four well-being scales, approximately 2 in 5 (40-47%) young people had very high scores (scoring 9-10).

- This is a larger proportion compared to averages in 13 other LAs and to peers in the general population
- Around 10% had low scores on the scales suggesting that whilst most looked after children and young people are flourishing in Southampton, there is a sub-group who need additional support and interventions.



Similar to results from our 2017 surveys, girls were more likely to be unhappy with their appearance compared to boys and this was linked to overall low well-being.



## Low Well-Being

- Five children (**4-7yrs**) gave responses suggesting low well-being. These children tended to not know why they were in care, not know who their social worker was and did not trust their carers.
- Six children (**8-11yrs**) were identified as having low well-being. 5 of these children were afraid to go to school because of bullying, 4 did not like school, and 4 were worried about their feelings or behaviour.
- 12 (11%) young people (**11-18yrs**) reported low well-being. These young people were more likely to be unhappy with their appearance, did not like school and felt that their carers did not notice how they were feeling or show an interest in their education





## **Section 2: Methodology**

# Methodology

- Three online surveys were used to capture looked after children and young people's views on their own well-being. The three versions were for:
  - a) children aged 4-7yrs (16 questions);
  - b) children aged 8-11yrs in primary school (31 questions); and
  - c) young people of secondary school age 11-18yrs (46 questions).
- There was a common set of 16 core questions.
- Paper surveys were also available and used in cases where no Internet was available, or when the young person preferred this method.
- In Southampton at the time of the survey 294 children and young people aged 4-18yrs were looked after and able to complete the survey.
- Children and young people completed the survey anonymously: individual identifiers such as name, school etc. were not collected in order to allow responses without fear of consequences.
- If children recorded names or any identifying information on the survey these were removed by the researchers.

# Methodology (2)

- The survey was distributed through the virtual school to head teachers and designated teachers in schools. Social care staff, including foster carers and social workers, were asked to encourage children and young people to complete the survey. Regular reminders were sent to head teachers and designated teachers and some schools were followed up directly.
- The survey was promoted in training sessions for designated teachers.
- Most children and young people were asked to complete the online survey in school in February and March 2018, with a trusted adult present. The trusted adult was usually the designated teacher, learning mentor or SENCO.
- Several other professionals also acted as trusted adults, including Advanced Practitioners, key workers in supported accommodation and Independent Reviewing Officers.
- Additional hours were funded for one IRO to visit children specifically for the purpose of supporting with responding to the survey.

# Methodology (3)

## Subjective well-being:

### Are children flourishing?

- Subjective well-being in this survey refers to children's own evaluations of how they feel about their lives.
- There are questions in the surveys about affect (e.g. how happy a child feels now), cognitive judgements (e.g. evaluations of relationships) and the inner world (e.g. life having meaning).
- All these elements help us understand whether children are flourishing.

- Where possible, LA data are compared to data on children in the general population, and to the average responses from 13 local authorities.
- Data were weighted and tests run for significant difference between LAs.
- In addition to questions that measure overarching well-being indicators (happiness, life satisfaction etc.) the questions cover four domains that are important to children and young people: Relationships, Resilience, Rights and Recovery. The report covers each of these.



On some pages of this report you will see a '**Bright Spots**' icon (shown left). This indicates a 'good news' story – a positive aspect of practice in your local authority.

This is where children and young people are doing significantly better than children in care in other local authorities or report the same or higher well-being than their peers in the general population.



# **Section 3: Survey results**



# 1. Demographics

- Sample sizes
- Age and gender
- Ethnicity
- Placements
- Length of time in care

# Sample sizes

Although the sample size must be borne in mind when considering the representativeness of the data, the response rate was significantly better than in some similar surveys. *The State of Nation: Children in Care 2015*, for example, had a response rate of 3%.

- 245 children and young people responded to the surveys from an eligible looked after population of 294.
- The overall response rate was 83%, a considerable increase compared to last year's response rate of 26%.
- There was a particularly good response rate from young people, where 96% of looked-after young people in Southampton were encouraged to have their views heard.

Age	Care population <i>n</i>	Responses <i>n</i>	Response rate %
4-7yrs	69	53	77%
8-11yrs	106	78	74%
11-18yrs	119	114	96%

# Age and gender

- In Southampton, 54% of the looked after population were boys. (DfE, 2017)
- Boys were under-represented in the survey responses for the 8-11yrs and 11-18yrs age groups.

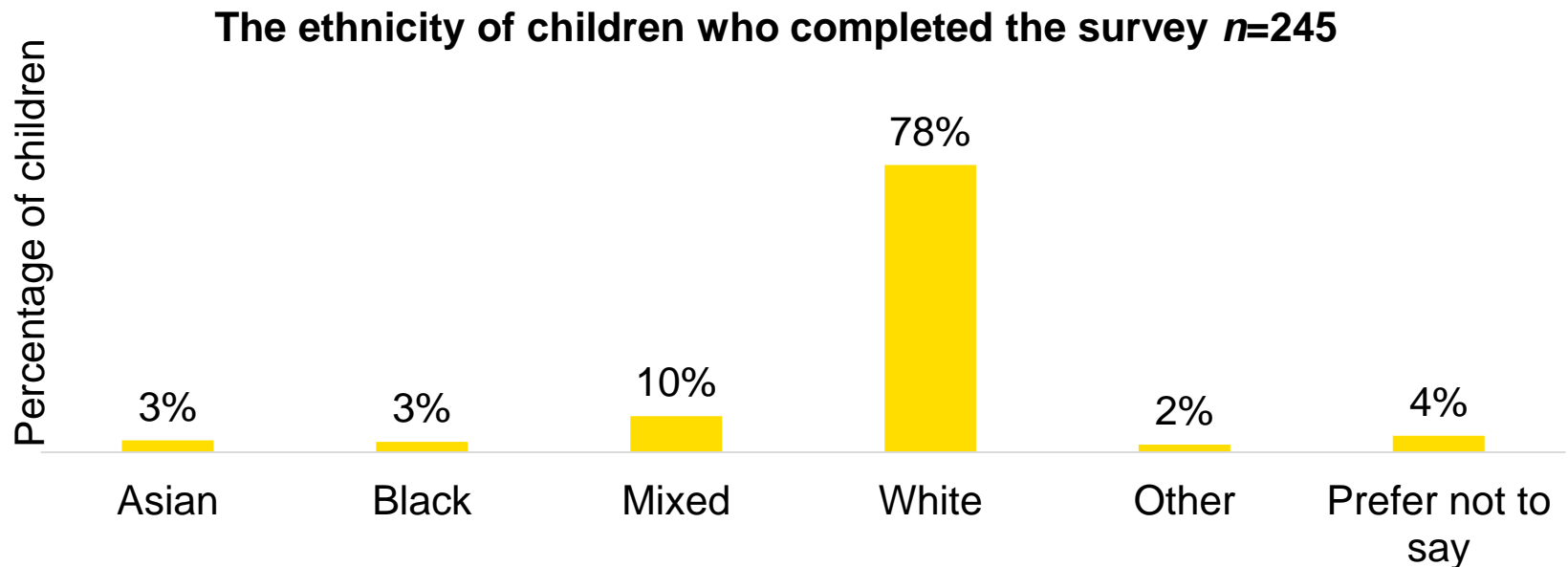
Age group	Girls <i>n</i> (%)	Boys <i>n</i> (%)	Prefer not to say/no reply <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	18 (34%)	35 (66%)	0 (0%)
8-11yrs	48 (61%)	28 (36%)	2 (3%)
11-18yrs	55 (48%)	58 (51%)	1 (1%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121 (49%)</b>	<b>121 (49%)</b>	<b>3 (2%)</b>



# Ethnicity

Children of Asian, black, mixed and other ethnicities were slightly over-represented in the survey as they made up 18% of the care population in Southampton's statistical return to the DfE (2017) compared to 21% in our sample.

- The majority (78%) of children and young people who completed the survey were white.



# Placements

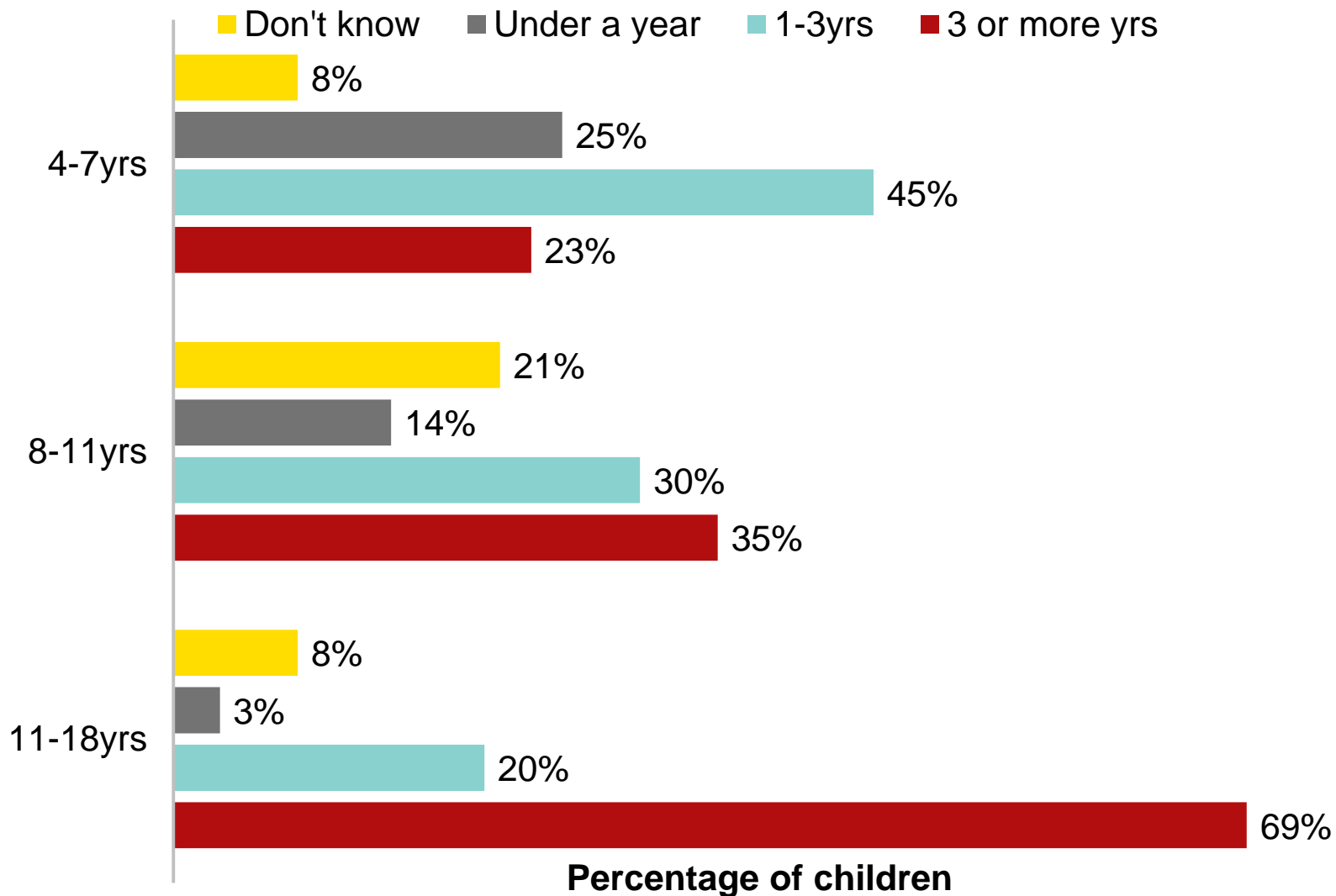
Placements in our sample broadly mirror the overall pattern in Southampton where 76% are placed with foster carers and a very small number live in residential care. (DfE, 2017)

- The majority (73%) of children and young people were living in foster care.

Age group	Foster care %	Family or friends care %	Residential care %	With parents %	Somewhere else %	Prefer not to say %
4-7yrs	68%	26%	2%	4%	0%	0%
8-11yrs	76%	14%	3%	7%	0%	0%
11-18yrs	74%	10%	3%	11%	1%	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

# Length of time in care

How long have you been in care?





## 2. Relationships

- Family contact
- Good friends
- Pets
- Adults you live with:  
Continuity and trust
- Social worker:  
Continuity and trust

# Family contact




The youngest children (4-7yrs) were not asked questions about family contact, as it was thought that they might become distressed or anxious.



Children and young people (8-18yrs) were asked whether they were *content with the frequency of contact that was taking place with their mother, father, and siblings.*

- 18 (24%) children (8-11yrs) and 20 (19%) young people (11-18yrs) had no face to face contact with either parent.
- Around a third of children and young people saw their dads 'just the right amount'. Nearly half were unable to see their fathers.
- 39% of children (8-11yrs) and 44% of young people (11-18yrs) saw their mothers 'just the right amount'. Just over a quarter (28%) felt that they saw their mothers 'too little'.
- A smaller proportion of children and young people felt happy with maternal contact arrangements compared to the results in last year's survey.
- Around half of children and young people were happy with sibling contact arrangements.
- In the majority of cases, children and young people used the text comments to say they wanted more contact. Several wanted to see siblings who had been adopted. Others worried about their parents or wrote about difficulties such as parents who were inconsistent.

# Family contact

Family member	Age group	Too much	Just right	Too little	I am unable to see them	Don't have any siblings
 Mother	8-11yrs n=72	2 (3%)	28 (39%)	20 (28%)	22 (30%)	-----
	11-18yrs n=105	6 (6%)	46 (44%)	30 (28%)	23 (22%)	-----
 Father	8-11yrs n=72	4 (5.5%)	22 (30.5%)	15 (21%)	31 (43%)	-----
	11-18yrs n=106	4 (4%)	32 (30%)	25 (24%)	45 (42%)	-----
 Siblings	8-11yrs n=70	8 (12%)	32 (46%)	19 (27%)	10 (14%)	1 (1%)
	11-18yrs n=106	7 (7%)	50 (47%)	32 (30%)	15 (14%)	2 (2%)

# Family contact: 8-11yrs

Children were also given the option of providing *comments about contact*.

- 39 children wrote about their thoughts and feelings about contact. Most wanted more contact, particularly with their mums and siblings. Several wrote about how they could not see some of their siblings because they had been adopted. Six children were happy with contact arrangements, whilst a few wanted their parents to be more consistent or accept the help they needed. Example quotes are shown below.

*I feel happy and excited about seeing mum and dad.*

*I want to see my Mum, Dad, brothers and sisters a lot more. And doggy.*

*It's not fair that I don't get to see my sister because she has been adopted. I would like to see my brother and my mum some more. I feel a bit angry about it most of the time.*

*Sometimes I go to visits with my Mum and Dad, but sometimes I don't want to see them. Sometimes they shout at me and my sisters and sometimes they are really kind. If I go to contact then I decide to go home at any point, which I like.*

*I need to see [mum] and see if [she] is safe and getting help because I really wanna see her and convince her to get help and try and listen to people who can help her become a loving mother again.*

# Family contact: 11-18yrs

- 33 young people wrote about their thoughts and feelings about contact. The majority wanted more contact with their family members. Several young people were happy with current arrangements or described who they lived with. Some young people wrote about barriers to having contact. Example quotes are shown below.

*I am happy with the contact I get.*

*I want to see my little brother and sister but not allowed because they're adopted.*

*Is it possible to have help with budgeting to see my family?  
11-18yrs*

*I think that I should have more contact with my family.  
11-18yrs*

*We might see our mum but only if she answers our text and phone calls, but my social worker is in touch with her.  
11-18yrs*



# Good friends



A lack of friendships is associated with loneliness and anxiety. All children and young people were asked whether they *had a really good friend*.

**General population:** *The Millennium Cohort Study (2015)* of young people aged 14yrs found that 3% of young people did not have a good friend.

- Most of the children and young people stated that they had at least one good friend but 10 (4%) did not.
- This was similar to their peers in the general population, where 3% did not have a good friend.

Age group	Yes I have a really good friend <i>n</i> (%)	No, I don't have a really good friend <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	48 (94%)	3 (6%)
8-11yrs	73 (96%)	3 (4%)
11-18yrs	108 (96%)	4 (4%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>229 (96%)</b>	<b>10 (4%)</b>

# Pets



Pets were important to children in all the focus groups we ran.

Children and young people said that pets are non-judgmental – they love you no matter what and are always pleased to see you. They can also give children an opportunity to take responsibility. Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked if they *had a pet in the home they lived in.*

- 78% of the 8-11yrs children lived in a household with a pet.
- In the older (11-18yrs group), 72% of young people had a pet where they lived.
- 19 children and 15 young people wanted to have a pet where they lived.

*I like watching TV with my carers and taking the dog for a walk...*  
4-7yrs

# Adults you live with: Continuity & trust

## Placement moves



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked *How many placements have you had since coming into care?*

Number of placements	Percentage
1 placement	42%
2-4 placements	32%
5-7 placements	15%
8-10 placements	5.5%
11+	0%
Don't know	5.5%

## Trust



Children and young people were asked whether they *trusted the adults they lived with (i.e. carers, parents).*

### Positive responses

- 92% of children (4-7yrs)
- 96% of those aged 8-11yrs and
- 98% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers.

*My foster family make me feel like one of their own children ... and are fun but fair.  
11-18yrs*

# Social worker: Continuity & trust

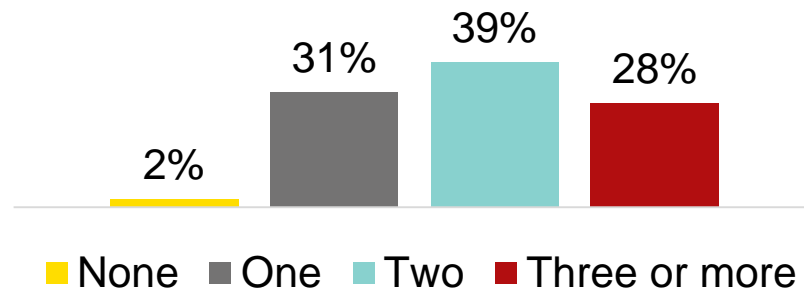
## Changes in social workers



11-18 year olds were asked:  
*How many social workers have you had in the past 12 months?*

- 67% answered that they had had three or more social workers in the previous year.

**How many social workers have you had in the last 12 months?**



## Trusting social worker



Children & young people ( $n=211$ ) who knew who their social worker was, were asked whether they *trusted their social worker*.

The level of trust in social workers was high.

- 93% of the youngest children (4-7yrs);
- 96% of children aged 8-11yrs; and
- 88% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their social worker.

# Changes since last survey

4-7yrs

8-11yrs

11-18yrs



Contact with mother just right

39% - 12%

44% - 8%



Contact with father just right

30.5% - 9.5%

30% = - 3%



Contact with siblings just right

46% - 5%

47% = + 3%



Have a good friend

94% - 6%

96% + 5%

96% = - 2%



Have a pet

78% - 6%

72% - 8%



Trust the adults they live with

92% = - 4%

96% = - 4%

98% = 0%



Trust social worker

93% = - 3%

96% = - 4%

88% = - 2%



1 social worker in last 12 months

31% = 0%



### 3. Resilience

- Trusted adult
- Being trusted & helping out
- Liking school
- Adults you live with:  
Support for learning
- Having fun & hobbies
- Access to nature
- Second chances
- Life skills
- Access to Internet at home

# Trusted adult

Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked *Do you have an adult who you trust, who helps you and sticks by you no matter what?*



The availability of one key adult has been shown to be the turning point in many looked after young people's lives. (Gilligan, 2009)

Having a trusted adult has been shown to be the main factor in helping children recover from traumatic events.

- Most children and young people wrote that they had a trusted adult in their lives:
  - 97% of children (8-11yrs) and
  - 95% of the 11-18yrs young people.
- 8 looked after children and young people had no such adult in their lives.

# Being trusted & helping out

Younger children (8-11yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to help the teacher*. Children had said in the focus groups that they were never trusted to show visitors around school or deliver a message because they were looked after.

- 27% of children (8-11yrs) responded that 'all or most of the time' they were asked to help and 51% answered 'sometimes'.
- 22% wrote 'hardly ever' or 'never'.



We asked young people: *How often do you get the chance to show you can be trusted?*

Having trusting relationships and being trusted were key issues raised by the children in the focus groups that underpinned the development of this survey.

- 57% of young people (11-18yrs) thought they were given opportunities 'all or most of the time' to show they could be trusted and 35% given them 'sometimes'.
- 5% 'hardly ever' and 3% 'never'.



# Liking school



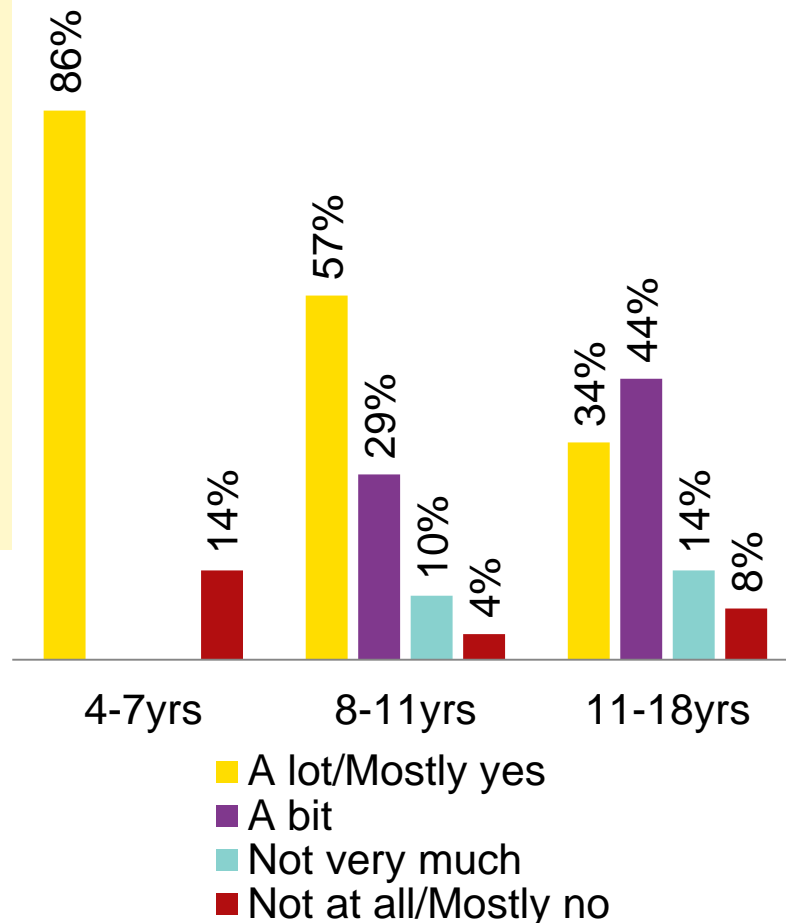
All the children and young people were asked how much they *liked school or college*.

## General population: Liking school

The *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (2015) of 5,335 young people (11-15yrs) reported that 80% liked school 'a lot' or 'a bit' and 20% 'not very much' or 'not at all'. Liking school decreased with the child's age and girls were more likely to say they enjoyed school 'a lot' in comparison with boys.

- 78% of the 11-18yrs group liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit', which is comparable to the general population.

## Do you like school?



# Adults you live with: Support for learning

bright spots



Children in the 8-11yrs and 11-18yrs surveys were asked whether the adults they lived with (e.g. carers, parents)

*showed an interest in what they were doing in school or college.*

## **General population: Support with learning**

In comparison the *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (11-15yrs) reported that 90% of children in England said their parents were interested in what happened at school.

- 96% of 8-11yrs and 97% of 11-18yrs recorded that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- A bigger proportion of young people felt that their carers were interested in what happened at school compared to their peers (90%) in the general population. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

# Having fun & hobbies

Children aged 4-11yrs were asked if they had *fun at the weekend*.



The 11-18yrs survey asked young people if they were able to *spend time on their own hobbies or activities outside of school*.

- Having fun was very important to children (4-11yrs). 16 children wrote about playing, having fun with friends and doing activities when asked what would make care better.
- All of the youngest children (4-7yrs) and the majority (75%) of children (8-11yrs) and young people did have fun and were active.

*It has been really good in [name]'s house. We do art. Nothing would make it better.*  
4-7yrs

Age group	Yes, I have fun/take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>	Sometimes I have fun/take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>	No, I don't have fun or take part in activities <i>n (%)</i>
4-7yrs	51 (100%)	-	0 (0%)
8-11yrs	52 (69%)	21 (28%)	2 (3%)
11-18yrs	75 (67%)	30 (27%)	7 (6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>178 (75%)</b>	<b>51 (21%)</b>	<b>9 (4%)</b>

# Access to nature



Contact with nature can reduce stress and improve mental health. (Play England, 2012)

We asked whether children and young people had opportunities to *explore the outdoors*, such as visiting parks, beaches, fields and forests. Some of the children in our focus groups said safeguarding fears limited their opportunities.

## General population:

About 11% of children (6-15yrs) had not visited the natural environment in the last year. (Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey 2016)

- 96% of children (8-11yrs) and 94% of young people (11-18yrs) answered that they did have access 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- A higher proportion of children and young people had opportunities to explore the outdoors, compared to their peers in the general population. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

## What would make care better?

*I wish it could be sunny every day.*  
4-7yrs

*I can be in a mood if I am bored and I never get a chance to go out.*  
11-18yrs

# Second chances

All children make mistakes and need a second or many more chances. It is part of learning and growing up. Many children involved in the focus groups stated that looked after children were too readily refused a second chance.



Young people aged 11-18yrs were asked if they felt they *got a second chance if they did something wrong.*

- 48% responded 'all or most of the time';
- 47% answered 'sometimes'; and
- 5% thought they 'hardly ever' or 'never' got a second chance.

# Life skills



We asked the young people in the 11-18yrs group, *how often do you get to practice life skills like cooking healthy food, washing clothes or going to the bank?*

This question was asked as many young people in the focus groups thought that they had been insufficiently prepared for independence.

- 85% of young people answered that they were taught independence skills 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' but 15% said this was 'hardly ever' or 'never' true.

*Being in care you should go for life skills otherwise your life could go off track, in bad ways. Being in care can make your life better.*  
11-18yrs

**What would make care better?**  
*If they let me do cooking at the foster care home.*  
11-18yrs

# Access to the Internet at home



























Young people 11-18yrs were asked *if they could connect to the Internet from home.*

## General population: Access to the Internet

- In the UK, 98% of households with children have an Internet connection. (ONS 2017)
- The *Millennium Cohort Study* of children aged 11yrs old found that children who never used the Internet outside school had a high probability of low well-being. (The Children's Society, 2014)
- The *majority* (94%) of young people reported that they did have access to the Internet.
- 7 (6%) young people 'hardly ever' or 'never' had access.

# Changes since last survey

	4-7yrs	8-11yrs	11-18yrs
 Have a trusted adult		97%  -1%	95%  -3%
 Asked to help at school / chance to be trusted		78%  +1%	92%  -1%
 Like school	86%  -7%	86%  0%	78%  -6%
 Adults interested in education		96%  -2%	97%  +4%
 Have fun / Do own hobbies & activities	100%  +4%	97%  +13%	94%  -4%
 Access to nature (parks, beaches, woods)		96%  +12%	94%  +1%
 Get a second chance			95%  0%
 Practice life skills			85%  -4%





## 4. Rights

- Included in decision-making
- Stigma of being in care
- Feeling safe in placement
- Bullying
- Knowing identity of social workers
- Contact with social workers

# Included in decision-making

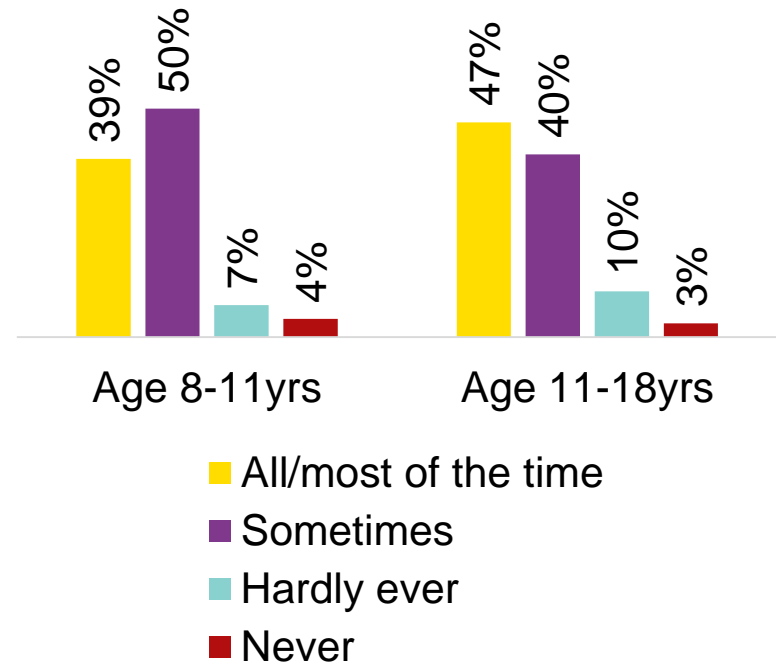


Children aged 8-18yrs were asked, *do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?*

- 89% of 8-11yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.
- 87% of 11-18yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.
- 10 young people wrote comments on wanting to be more included in decisions and 2 young people wrote about how they felt included by their foster carers.

*They changed my social worker I liked without asking me if I was okay with it.*  
11-18yrs

**Do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?**



# Stigma of being in care



The 11-18yrs age group were asked a question in the survey about feeling different: *do adults do things that make you feel embarrassed about being in care?*

Younger children were not asked these questions, as the focus groups suggested that being made to feel different was of much greater concern in adolescence.

- 12 (10.5%) of young people recorded that adults did things that made them feel embarrassed about being in care.
- 7 young people took the opportunity to write about what made them feel embarrassed. The comments varied:

*[My carers] are a lot older than most of my friends' parents and it always looks weird when I am with them and people think they are my grandparents and it's a bit embarrassing.*

11-18yrs

*I don't like people coming into school with badges on.*

11-18yrs

*Still treat me like a little kid (e.g. respite carer) - child based activities etc.*

11-18yrs

*I don't like people saying I'm in care as I count it as just living with grandparents.*

11-18yrs

# Feeling safe in placement

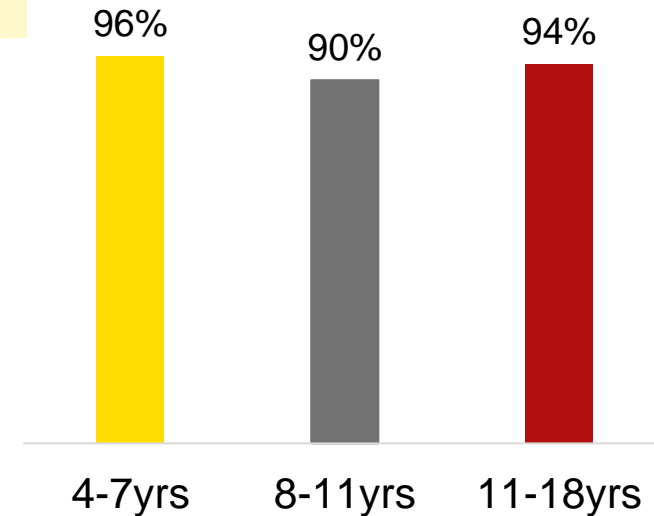
bright spots



All children were asked whether they *felt safe in the home they lived in now*. It is difficult to know what children were thinking about when answering, but feeling secure is about how the world *feels*, not necessarily how it is.

- Overall, 93% of children and young people reported that they ‘all or most of the time’ felt safe in their placements.
- 2 (4%) of the 4-7yrs group answered ‘mostly no’. These 2 children responded negatively to questions about their carer.
- 8 (10%) of the 8-11yrs group and 7 (6%) of the 11-18yrs group ticked the ‘sometimes’, ‘hardly ever’ or ‘never’ boxes.

**I feel safe in the home I live in all or most of the time**



## General population:

*The Children's Worlds* survey found that 75% of children (8-13yrs) in the general population felt ‘Totally safe’ at home. (Rees *et al.*, 2014) Not feeling safe is associated with raised cortisol levels and difficulty in learning and concentration. (Harvard University, 2012)

# Bullying

Our question asked whether *children felt afraid of going to school because of bullying* and if they were bullied were they *getting support from an adult*.

## General population: Bullying

- The analysis of the *Children's Worlds surveys* in 22 countries has shown that being free from bullying is one of the most important factors in children's well-being. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)
- About 12% of children in England say they are regularly bullied at school. (ONS 2016b)

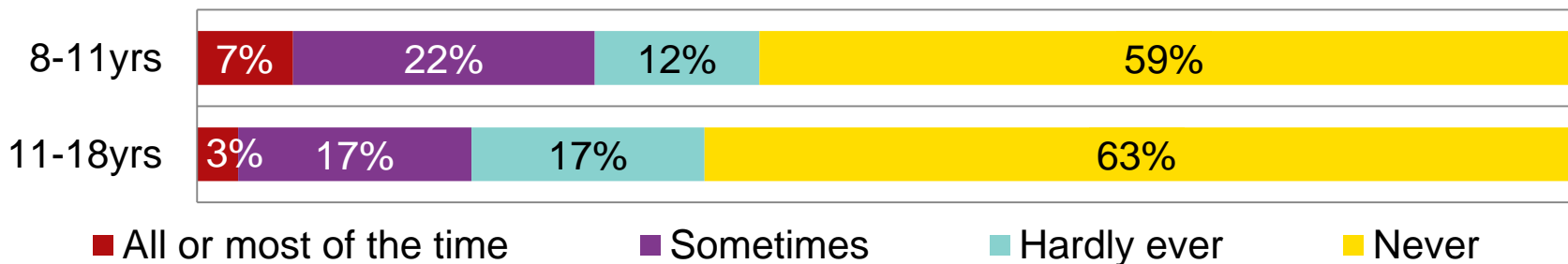
## What would make care better?

*Helping me when people bully me and take the mick out of me when they say, 'Where is your mum?'*

11-18yrs

- 21 (29%) children (8-11yrs) were 'sometimes' or 'all or most of the time' afraid to go to school because of bullying. All but one of these children felt they were getting support.
- 22 (20%) young people reported that they were afraid to go to school because of bullying. But 18 (86%) of them felt that they were getting support from an adult.
- Compared to last year, there has been an improvement in the proportion of children and young people who felt they were getting support to cope with bullying.

## Do you ever feel afraid of going to school or college because of bullying?



# Knowing identity of social workers



All the children and young people were asked if they *knew their current social worker*.

- Overall 88% did know who their social worker was.
- 29 (12%) children and young people did not know who their social worker was.
- Compared to last year, a **higher proportion** of children and young people in Southampton knew their social worker.

Age group	Know social worker <i>n</i> (%)	Don't know social worker <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	43 (81%)	10 (19%)
8-11yrs	68 (89%)	8 (11%)
11-18yrs	100 (90%)	11 (10%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>211 (88%)</b>	<b>29 (12%)</b>

# Contact with social workers



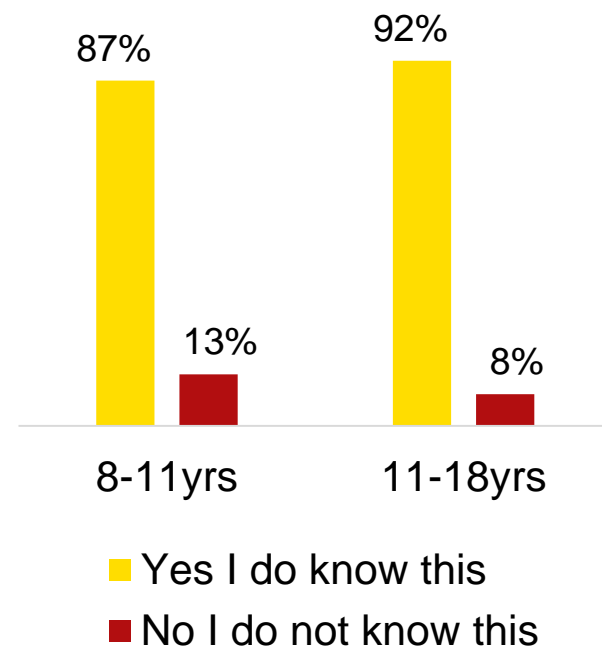
Children and young people (n=211) who knew their social worker were asked *how easy it was to contact them*.



Children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) were also asked whether *they knew they could speak to their social worker on their own*.

- A high proportion (82.5%) of young people (11-18yrs) reported that they could get easily get in touch with their social worker 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. However, 17 (17.5%) could 'hardly ever' or 'never' get in touch with their social worker.
- The majority of children (8-11yrs) and almost all of those aged over 11yrs knew they could ask to speak to their social worker on their own.

**Do you know you have the right to speak to a social worker on your own?**



# Changes since last survey

4-7yrs

8-11yrs

11-18yrs



Included in decision making

89% 0%

87% -3%



Embarrassed by adults bringing up care

10.5% -3.5%



Feel safe where they live

96% +3%

90% -1%

94% +1%



Afraid to go to school because of bullying

29% +6%

20% 0%



Supported with bullying

95% +25%

86% +8%



Know their social worker

81% +6%

89% +7%

90% +1%



Easy to contact social worker

82.5% -9.5%



Know they can speak to social worker alone

87% -1%

92% +1%





## 5. Recovery

- Knowing reason for being in care
- Feeling settled in placement
- Liking bedrooms
- Adults you live with:  
Sensitive parenting
- Adults you live with:  
Sharing confidences
- Support with worries
- Parity with peers
- Happiness with appearance

# Knowing reason for being in care

Having a coherent account of one's history and understanding the reasons that led to becoming looked after are important in the development of an integrated identity and in recovery from abuse and neglect.

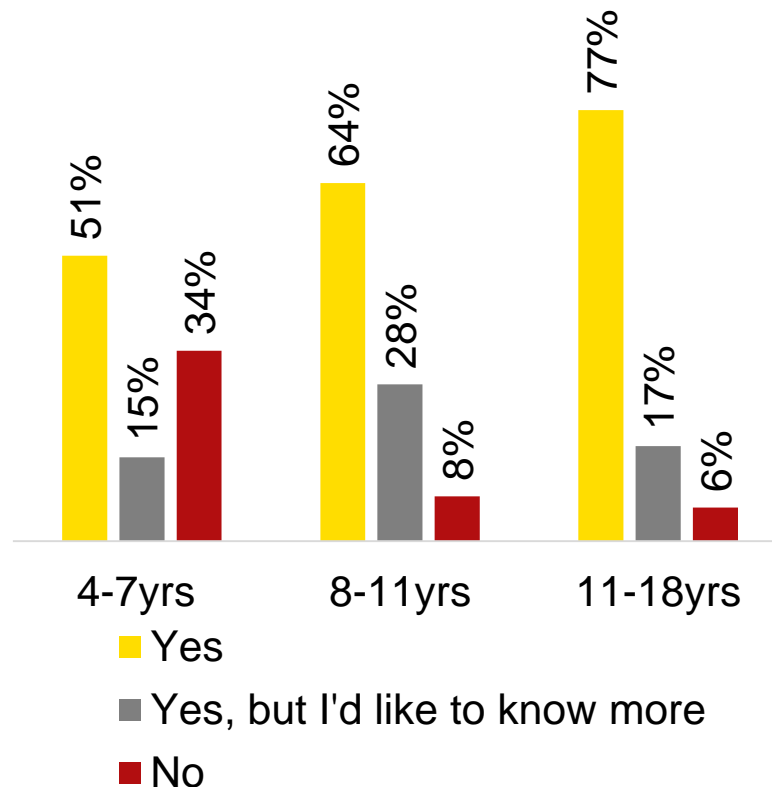
(Adshead, 2012; Adler, 2012)



All the children and young people were asked if *someone had explained why they were in care.*

- Half of the youngest children (4-7yrs) wanted to know more about why they were in care.
- A higher proportion of the older children (64%) and young people (77%) knew why they were in care.
- 53 children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) wanted more information about what had led them to being in care.

## Has someone explained why you are in care?



# Feeling settled in placement

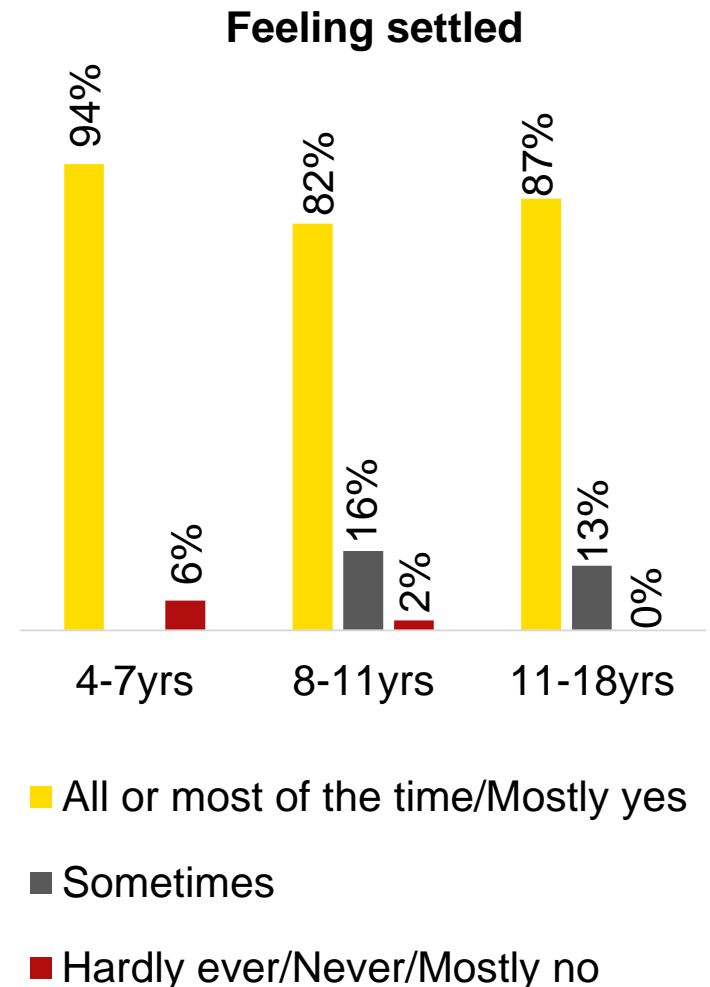
bright spots



The surveys aimed to capture whether children felt a sense of belonging and felt at ease in their placements. Based on the advice from our focus groups, children and young people were asked, *do you feel settled in the home you live in now? (Do you feel comfortable, accepted and at ease?)*

Children (4-7yrs) could answer 'mostly yes' or 'mostly no'. Children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) could answer: 'all or most of the time', 'sometimes', 'hardly ever', or 'never'.

- The majority of children and young people felt settled in their homes.
- For young people (11-18yrs), a significantly higher proportion felt settled in their placements compared to looked-after young people (78%) in 13 other LAs. This was also an improvement on last year, where 77% felt settled. This is a Bright Spot of practice.



# Liking bedrooms

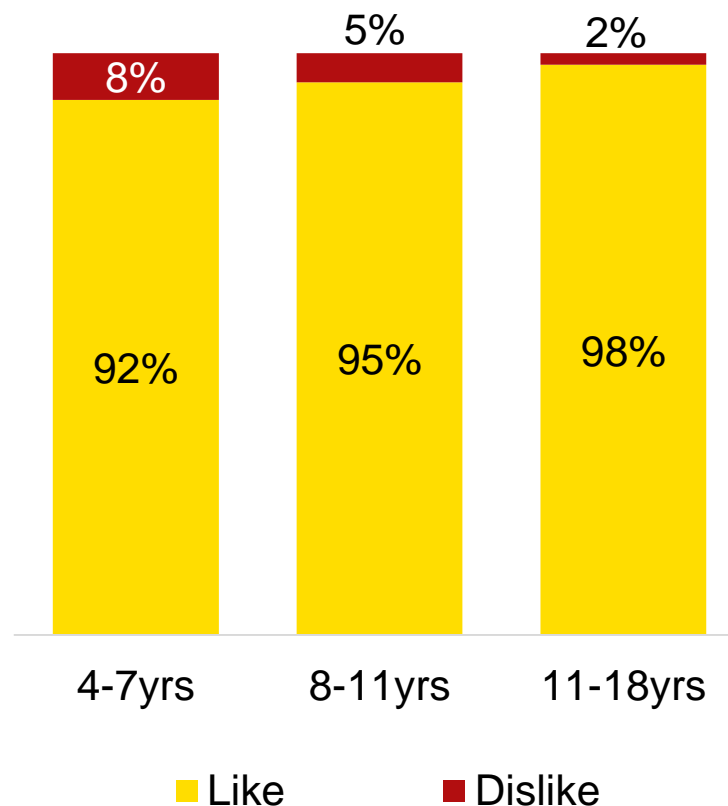


Liking your bedroom was an important feature for the focus groups we ran.

Young people reflected that their bedrooms were a place for being on your own in busy homes. It is linked to safety, sense of identity and feeling a sense of belonging.

- The majority of children and young people liked their bedrooms. Some wrote:
  - *I want to have my own bedroom and have my toys in my room.* (8-11yrs)
  - *I would like a new bed.* (11-18yrs)

## Do you like your bedroom?



# Adults you live with: Sensitive parenting



All children were asked whether the adults they lived with *noticed how they were feeling*.

*They are kind, helpful  
and they make me  
smile a lot.*  
11-18yrs

- 80% of children (4-7yrs) thought their carers noticed how they were feeling.
- However 10 (20%) did not. This was a significantly higher proportion compared to other LAs, where 9% of children (4-7yrs) felt that their carers did not notice how they were feeling.
- 92% of children (8-11yrs) and 95.5% of young people (11-18yrs) thought their carers noticed how they were feeling 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- Several children and young people used the text boxes to write that they felt their carers looked after them.

# Adults you live with: Sharing confidences

bright spots



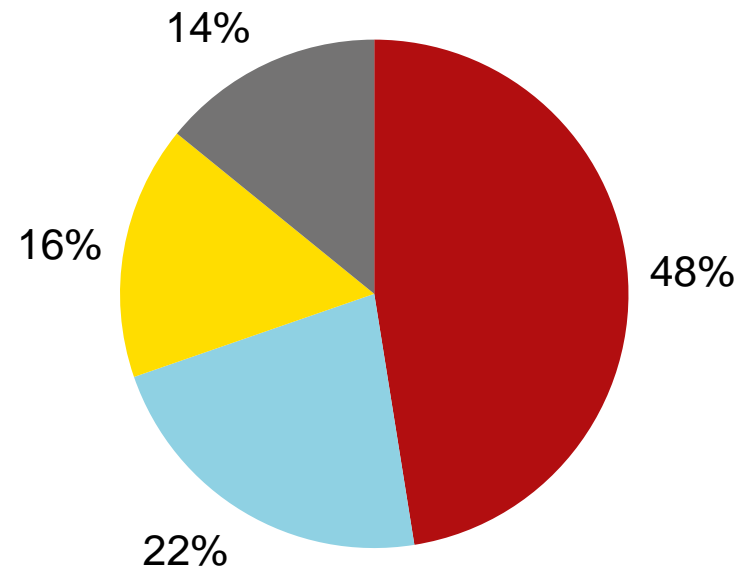
Young people were asked how frequently they *talked to the adults that they lived with about the things that mattered to them.*

## General population

The *Understanding Society* survey (2017) found that 66% of children (10-15yrs) talked regularly to a parent.

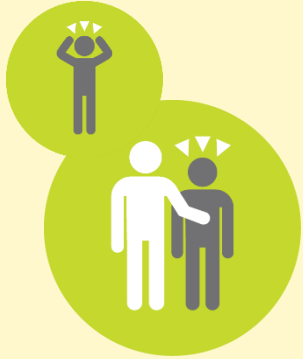
- 70% of young people talked regularly with their carers/parents about things that mattered to them.
- A greater proportion of young people talked to their carers regularly than their peers in the general population. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

## Speaking to adults about things that matter



- Most days
- More than once a week
- Less than once a week
- Hardly ever

# Support with worries



Children and young people (8-11yrs and 11-18yrs) were asked if they *worried about their own feelings or behaviour* and, if they *did have concerns, were they receiving support*.

## General population & other comparative data: Mental health

- Studies of looked after populations show that children's level of difficulties are much higher, ranging from about 45% of children in foster care to 75% of those in residential. (Ford *et al.*, 2007)
- In the general population, 13.5% of children have SDQ scores that suggest they have a clinical level of mental health difficulties. (ONS, 2016b)

- 14% children (8-11yrs) worried 'all or most of the time' and 40% 'sometimes'.
- 95% of children who reported worrying thought they were getting help.
- 8% young people (11-18yrs) worried 'all or most of the time' and 45% 'sometimes'.
- 78% of young people who reported worrying thought they were getting help.

*I think adults need to be stricter with me, so that I can be better with my behaviour.*  
11-18yrs

# Parity with peers



Young people (11-18yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to do similar things to their friends.*

- 86% of young people reported that 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' they did do similar things to their friends.
- 16 (14%) young people reported that they could 'hardly ever' or 'never' do similar things to their friends.
- Compared to last year, a smaller proportion of young people felt that they got to do similar things to their friends.

**What would make care better?**

*To be more independent and do things what my other friends are allowed to do, like go shopping with mates.*

11-18yrs



# Happiness with appearance



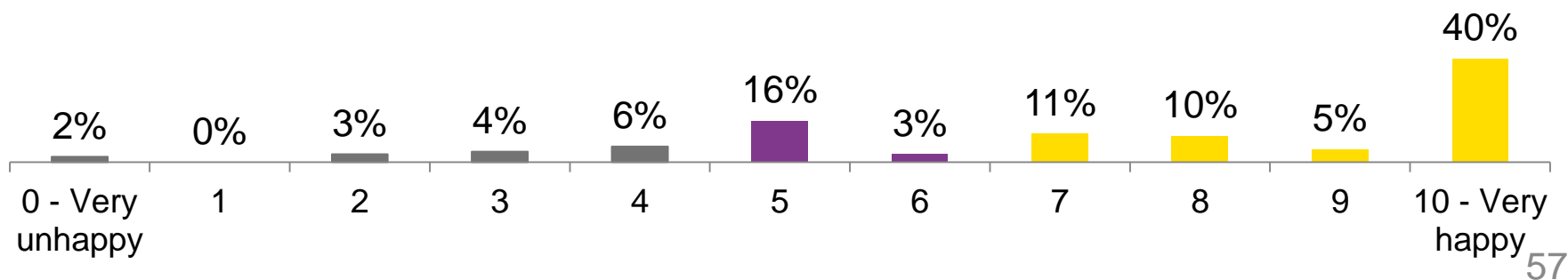
Studies have shown that poor body image is associated with low self-esteem, depression and self-harm. (Cash and Smolek, 2011)

## General population: Happiness with appearance

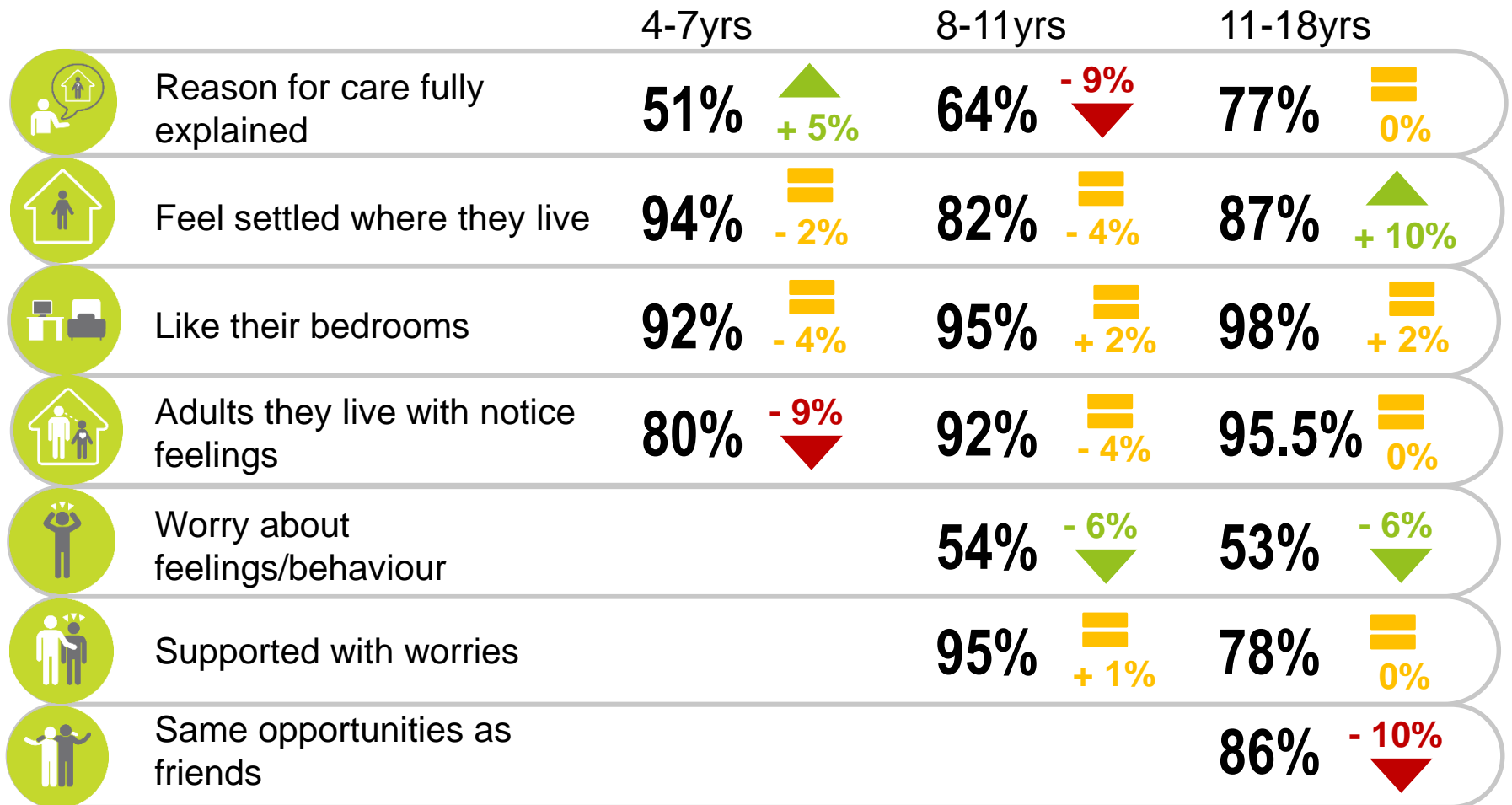
- 10% of 10-17 year olds in the general population are unhappy with their appearance. Girls are more likely to have a lower opinion of their appearance than boys. (The Children's Society, 2017)

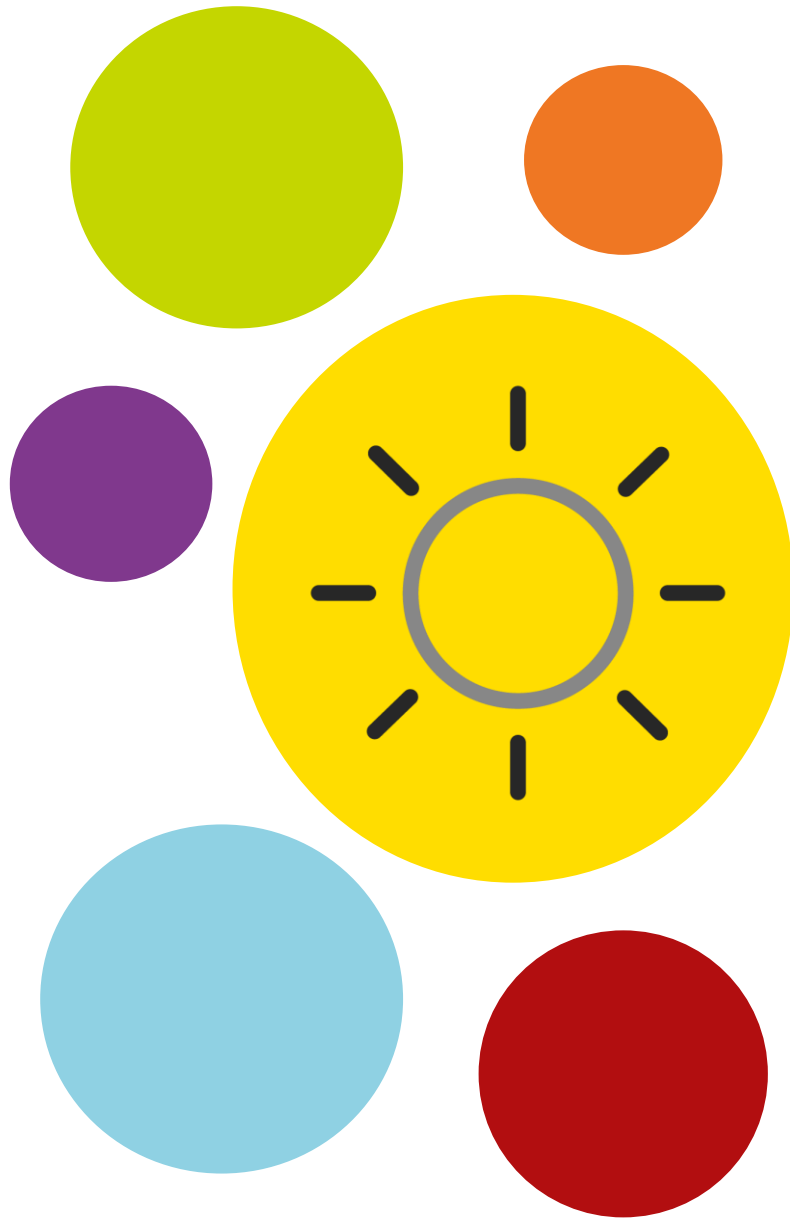
- Two-thirds (66%) of young people had high scores and were happy or very happy with their appearance.
- 15% disliked their appearance.

## How happy are you with the way you look?



# Changes since last survey





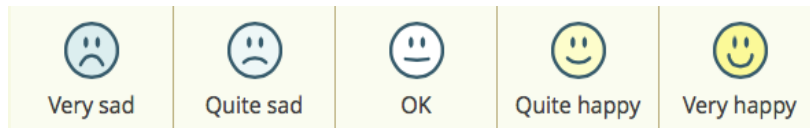
## 6. Well-being

- Happiness yesterday – affect
- Life satisfaction – overall evaluation
- The things you do in life are worthwhile – psychological/ eudemonic well-being
- Positivity about the future
- Comparisons – overall well-being
- Life is improving
- Gender differences – 11-18
- Low well-being

# Happiness yesterday

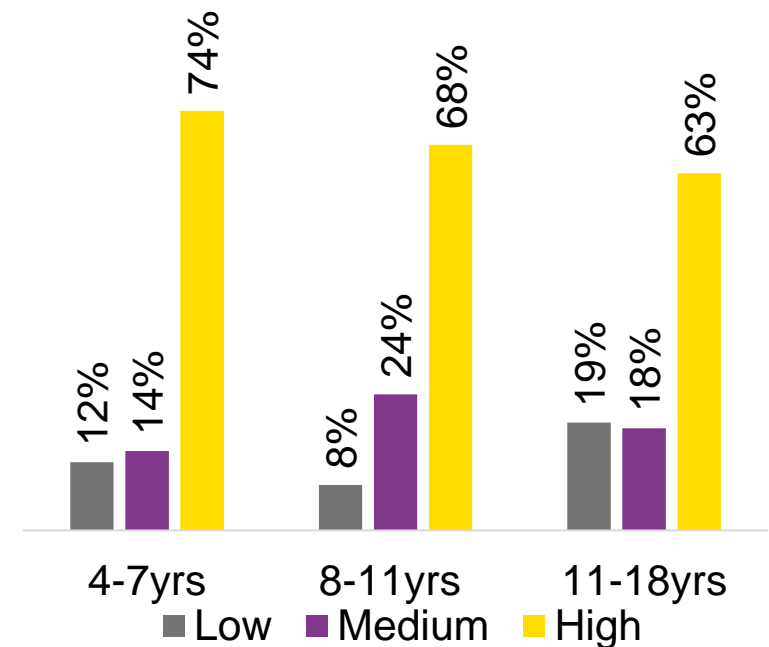
The decrease in happiness with age occurs in all surveys. Well-being decreases from school year 5 onwards with age 14-15yrs being the lowest point. It then starts to rise again. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)

- Children (4-7yrs & 8-11yrs) were asked to rate *how happy they were yesterday* on a five-point scale, from 'very sad' to 'very happy'.



- Young people (11-18yrs) selected a point on a 0-10 scale with 0 being 'very sad'.
- The majority of children and young people had been happy the previous day.
- 12 (10%) children (4-11yrs) and 21 (19%) young people (11-18yrs) reported that yesterday they had been 'quite sad' or 'very sad'.

## Happiness yesterday



# Life satisfaction

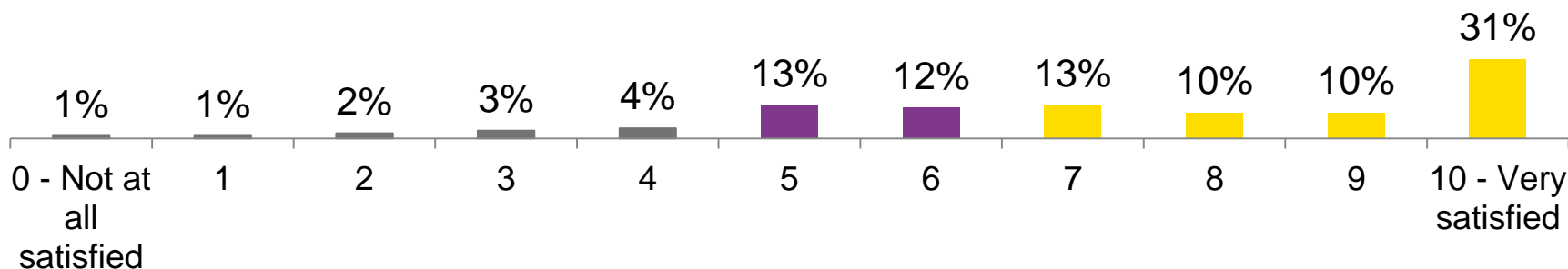


Young people (11-18yrs) were asked *how satisfied they were with their life* on a 0-10 scale.

This question exactly replicates The Children's Society survey question. A score of 7 or more is considered to be high life satisfaction. (The Cabinet Office, 2012)

- 64% of young people had very high or high life satisfaction scores.
- Like the general child population in England there was a positive correlation between high life satisfaction scores and being happy at school.

## How satisfied are you with your life?



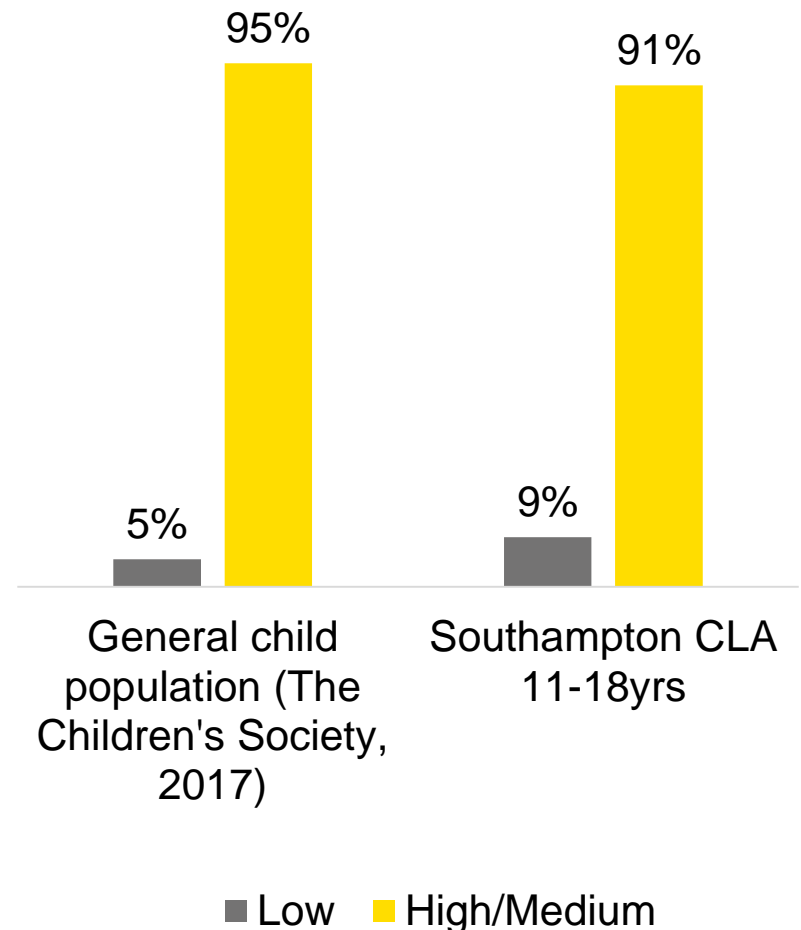
# Are the things you do worthwhile?

Having a meaning or a purpose to life is strongly associated with well-being. (ONS, 2014)

Young people (11-18yrs) completed the same 0-10 scale as used by The Children's Society (2017) in their household survey with 3,000 young people aged 10-17yrs.

- 67% of young people scored high or very high
- 24% medium
- 9% low.

**Overall, to what extent do you think the things you do in your life are worthwhile?**



# Positivity about the future

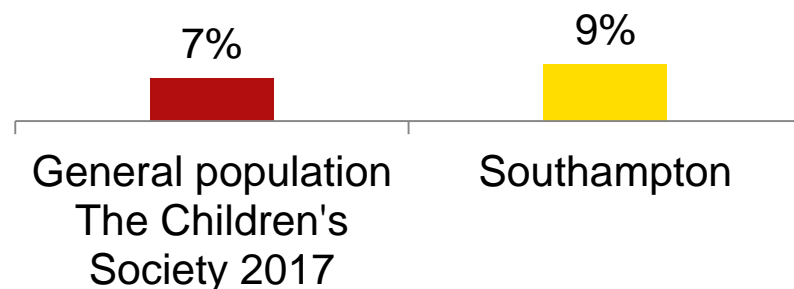


Optimism about the future is linked with happiness and resilience (Conversano et al., 2010) Young people were asked on a scale of 0-10 *how positive they were about the future*

- 74 (69%) were positive about their future.
- 10 (9%) had low scores and felt pessimistic about their future.

*Going into care has really helped me, as I got a fresh start in life to do good things with my future, so I appreciate it.*  
11-18yrs

**Young people who were pessimistic about their future: comparison of Southampton's (11-18yrs) looked after children with the general child population**



# Comparisons

Levels of well-being – Southampton’s looked after young people (11-18yrs) compared to peers (10-17yrs) in the general population (The Children’s Society, 2017) and to the average scores of looked after young people in 13 other LAs.

	Scores	Southampton %	2018 average in 13 LAs %	Peers in general population (10-17yrs) %
Life satisfaction	Very high (score 9-10)	41%	34%	27%
	Low (score 0-4)	12%	15%	5%
Happiness yesterday	Very high (score 9-10)	47%	39%	26%
	Low (score 0-4)	20%	19%	8%
Things done are worthwhile	Very high (score 9-10)	42%	36%	29%
	Low (score 0-4)	9%	12%	6%
Positive about future	Very high (score 9-10)	44%	35%	19%
	Low (score 0-4)	9%	11%	7%

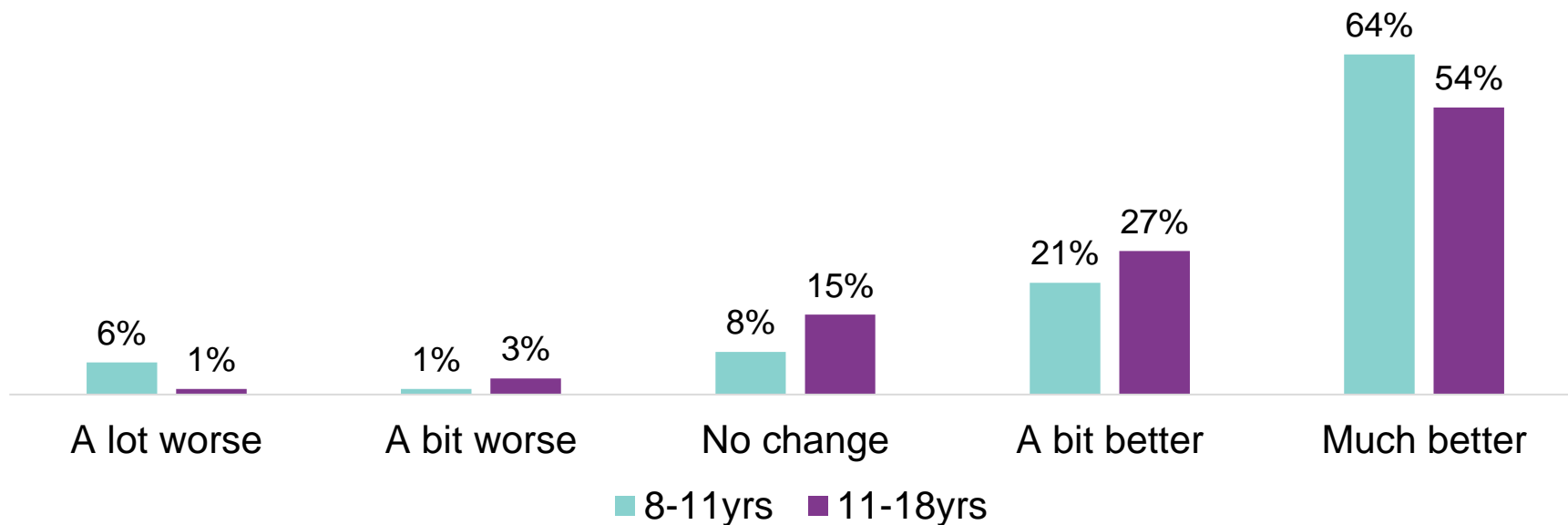


# Life is improving

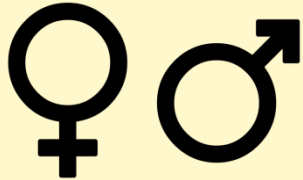
Children aged 8-18yrs were asked whether they thought their *life was getting better*, and could choose from a five point scale ranging from 'A lot worse' to 'Much better'.

- The majority (83%) of children in Southampton felt that their lives were improving.
- Four children (8-11yrs) felt that their lives were getting much worse.

Is your life improving?



# Gender differences 11-18yrs



The Children's Society (2017) reported that in the general

population one in seven (14%) girls (10-15yrs) were unhappy with their lives as a whole as were one in ten boys.

Examining gender differences in our surveys in 2017, we found no gender difference in the surveys for 4-7yrs and 8-11yrs but girls aged 11-18yrs were more likely to report low well-being. Girls were four times more likely to be unhappy with their appearance and this contributed to gender differences in well-being.



- Girls were more likely to report low well-being compared to boys.
- Similar to the results from our 2017 surveys, girls were twice as likely to be unhappy with their appearance compared with boys.

# Low well-being: 4-7yrs



- 6 (11%) of the children in the 4-7yrs group described themselves as 'very sad'. One child responded positively to all the other questions: 5 children were identified as having low well-being.
- Children with low well-being also tended to report that they:
  - did not have an understanding of why they were in care.
  - did not know who their social worker was.
  - did not trust their carers.

**What would make care better?**

*It would be better if I could see my brother more.*

4-7yrs

# Low well-being: 8-11yrs



- 6 (8%) of the children in the 8-11yrs group described themselves as 'very sad'. Examining their responses to other questions:
  - 5 children were 'sometimes' afraid of going to school because of bullying and 4 children did not like school.
  - 4 children wanted to know more about why they were in care.
  - 4 children worried about their feelings or behaviour 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
  - 4 children were unhappy with the frequency of maternal contact and wrote about missing their families when asked, 'What would make care better?'

## **What would make care better?**

*To see mummy more if children do not live with their mummy.*

8-11yrs

## **What would make care better?**

*I think children should be given photos of their birth family.*

8-11yrs

# Low well-being: 11-18yrs



- 12 (11%) young people had low well-being (i.e. scored 4 or less on two or more of the 0-10 well-being scales).
- Young people with low well-being also tended to report that they:
  - Disliked their appearance.
  - Did not like school.
  - Did not feel that their carers noticed how they were feeling or showed an interest in their education.
  - Did not talk regularly to their carers about things that mattered to them.
  - Did not trust their social worker and found it difficult to get in touch with them.
  - Were afraid to go to school because of bullying.

# Changes since last survey

4-7yrs

8-11yrs

11-18yrs



Happy yesterday

74% **-5%**

68% **-7%**

63% **-4%**



Satisfied with life as a whole

64% **-13%**



Things they do are worthwhile

67% **-19%**



Positive about the future

69% **-12%**



Life is getting better

85% **0%**

81% **-4%**



Low overall well-being

11% **0%**



## **Section 4: Children and young people's comments**

*Is there anything else you would like to tell us? What would make being in care better for you?*

# Comments: 4-7yrs

- 22 (51%) children (age 4-7yrs) gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 8 children wrote about games and activities they enjoyed and wished they could do more of.
- 5 children wrote that they were happy.
- 5 children wrote about their placements, saying, for example:
  - *I would like to live with my forever carers as my carers isn't the right place for me because of my foster brothers and sisters. And I am not sure about their grandkids because one is very bossy.*
  - *I am going to stay there forever.*
- 3 children missed their families.
- Other children wrote:

*I. Am. Happy. Living.  
With. Nan. And.  
Grandad.*

## **What would make care better?**

*Going to the water parks and  
the park where there is a  
water slide.*

*I am happy and have lots  
of toys and see Mum and  
Dad and Gan Gan after  
school sometimes.*

*Seeing mummy in  
contact more. Seeing her  
every Saturday now but  
want to see her Saturday  
and Sunday.*



# What could make care better and other comments: 8-11yrs

- 28 (36%) children gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 11 children wanted more contact with their birth families, particularly their mothers.
- 7 children wrote about the games they wanted to play with their friends.
- 6 children wrote that they liked being in care.
- 3 children felt unsettled or that they did not have control over their lives.
- Other children wrote:

*I wish that I didn't have to be moved around so much because when you think I have not got the right home I have actually liked the home. Moving around a lot makes me feel upset and a bit worried.*

*I would love to move back with my mum because it will make my life really happy.*

*I feel loved and much better when I am with [name]!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
!!!!!!!*

*Every thing is better. I have lots of friends.*

*I love it in care.*

*My social worker could tell us when she is coming around because sometimes it's only me and my brother at home and she lets herself in without asking. If I don't talk that may mean I'm either shy or I do not want to talk to [name], so I would like her to lay off.*

# What could make care better and other comments: 11-18yrs

- 26 (23%) young people gave text responses on: *What would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- Several young people expressed some frustration around being in care, such as not liking meetings or not knowing why they were in care.
- 7 young people recorded that they were happy or there was nothing they wanted to change.
- 4 young people wanted more independence or less rules.
- 3 young people wanted more contact with family members
- Other young people wrote:
  - *I like being in the care council.*

*There is nothing I can change - just the whole idea of being in care makes life difficult.*

*It's all calm.*

*More freedom.*

**[What would make care better?]**  
*To know why I am in care. If they let me do cooking at the foster care home.*

*Nothing because I have wonderful carers.*

*It's ok, people in care need to be reminded that they are not alone and there are so many others in the same circumstances as them.*

*I don't want to be in care. I want to see my mum more!*



## **Section 5: Positive aspects of practice and areas for improvement**

# What's working well

- In Southampton, 6 areas stood out as Bright Spots of practice.
- The majority (93%) of children and young people felt safe in their placement.
- A greater proportion of young people (11-18yrs) felt settled compared to looked after young people in 13 other LAs.
- Children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) felt supported in their education, with 96% feeling that their carers showed an interest in what happened at school. This compares favourably to 90% of children in the general population.
- A greater proportion of young people (11-18yrs) spoke regularly to their carers about things that mattered to them, compared to the general population: 70% in Southampton compared to 66% of peers.
- All of the youngest children got to have fun at the weekends.
- A larger proportion of the the 8-11yrs and 11-8yrs groups felt they were given opportunities to explore the outdoors compared to their peers in the general population. For 8-11yrs, there had been an improvement on last year, with a higher proportion of children having opportunities to explore the outdoors.

# What could be improved

- **Provide additional training for carers on therapeutic parenting.** Whilst the majority of those aged 8-18yrs felt that their carers noticed how they were feeling, it is concerning that 10 (20%) of the youngest children (4-7yrs) did not feel that their carers noticed their feelings. Not trusting their carers was also associated with low well-being for the youngest children.
- **Regularly review contact plans** and ensure that children and young people's wishes and feelings are taken into account and to ensure that they understand the reasons for contact decisions. The majority of text comments were about wanting more contact with family members.
- **Help children understand why they are in care** and revisit their life stories. Nearly half (49%) of 4-7yrs and 36% of 8-11yrs did not know why they were in care.
- **Ensure that all children and young people know who their social worker is.** 19% of the youngest children (4-7yrs) did not know their social worker and this was associated with low well-being.
- **Provide opportunities to build self esteem** and help young people with their confidence and positive body image. 54% of children (8-11yrs) and 53% of young people were 'all/most of the time' or 'sometimes' worried about their feelings or behavior.
- **Continue to work with schools to identify and help children who feel bullied at school.** 21 children and 22 young people reported that they were afraid to go to school because of bullying.



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**For enquiries about the Bright Spots project see:**  
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