



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

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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 was originally developed in England with funding from the Hadley Trust.

Bright Spots in Wales is a pilot with six local authorities funded by the Children's Commissioner for Wales & Welsh Government through the work of the Improving Outcomes for Children Ministerial Advisory Group to measure looked after children's subjective well-being – how they feel about their lives and their care.

- 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 English 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:

122 looked after children and young people responded to the survey: a 32% response rate. Swansea achieved a reasonably representative sample, with boys and minority ethnic children being slightly over-represented.



80% of children and young people felt their lives were improving.



All children (4-11yrs) and **92%** of young people (11-18yrs) felt their carers were interested in their education.



All children (8-11yrs) and **89%** of young people (11-18yrs) had a trusted adult in their lives.



About **86%** of children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) felt included in social work decision-making 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.



100% of the youngest children (4-7yrs) and about 93% of children (8-11yrs) and **92%** of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers.



Most children and young people felt safe and settled in their placements.

Key findings:

Young people (11-18yrs)



49 young people reported worrying about their feelings or behaviour. **31%** of those who reported worrying did not feel they were getting support from an adult, compared with **25%** across other Welsh authorities.

7 (9%) young people could not connect to the Internet in their placement. This is a larger proportion than the **2%** of households with children in the Welsh population with no Internet connection.

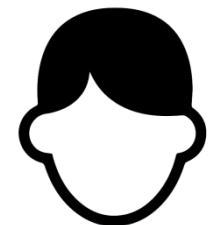


A smaller proportion (**66%**) of young people (11-18yrs) reported liking school compared with both other young people living in Wales (**73%**) and other looked after young people in other Welsh authorities (**71%**).

More looked after young people (**13%**) were afraid of bullying in comparison with young people (**10%**) living in Wales. A **quarter** of these young people did not feel supported to deal with bullying.



Girls were statistically more likely than boys to dislike their appearance, whereas boys were more likely than girls to be scared of bullying.



Key findings:



A slightly larger proportion of children and young people in Swansea felt the amount of contact with parents as 'just right' compared to looked after children in 5 other Welsh authorities.

5 children (8-11yrs) and 8 young people (11-18yrs) had no face to face contact with *either* parent.



2 (**7%**) children (8-11yrs) and 9 (**12%**) young people (11-18yrs) reported not having a good friend. Having no friends puts young people at greater risk of anxiety and depression. In the general population, only **3%** are friendless.



78% of children (8-11yrs) and **65%** of young people (11-18yrs) had a pet where they were living; similar to the general population of children (**66%**) in Wales.



None of the children aged 4-11yrs had low well-being although four described themselves as sad the day before the survey.



16 (22%) of young people had low well-being. This was associated with:

- not liking how they looked;
- not having a good friend;
- not having a trusted adult in their lives;
- not liking school.



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) younger 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.
- Surveys were available in English and Welsh
- Paper surveys were also available and used in cases where no Internet connection was available, or when the child preferred this method.
- In Swansea at the time of the survey 381 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

- The survey was distributed through education leads to head teachers and LAC designated teachers in schools. Given the number of looked after young people aged 16-18 in Swansea, the leaving care service was used to support responses from this age group. 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 social workers and some schools were followed up directly.
- Independent Reviewing Officers were encouraged to introduce the survey to young people at review meetings.
- In the final week, a core group of strategic leads followed up contacts in schools, IRO services and the leaving care service.
- Most children and young people were asked to complete the online survey in school over a five week period from February-March 2018 and, where appropriate, with a trusted adult present. The trusted adult was usually a teacher, learning mentor, SENCO or personal advisor.
- The survey was also promoted through other communication channels including the local authority's social media accounts, school's newsletter and staff intranet.

Methodology

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 looked after young people (11-18yrs) in 6 Welsh 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 the Nation: Children in Care, 2015* for example, had a response rate of 3%.

- 122 children and young people completed the surveys from an eligible looked after population of 381.
- The overall response rate was 32%.

Age	Care population <i>n</i>	Responses <i>n</i>	Response rate %
4-7yrs	58	11	(19%)
8-11yrs	97	32	(33%)
11-18yrs	226	79	(35%)

Age and gender

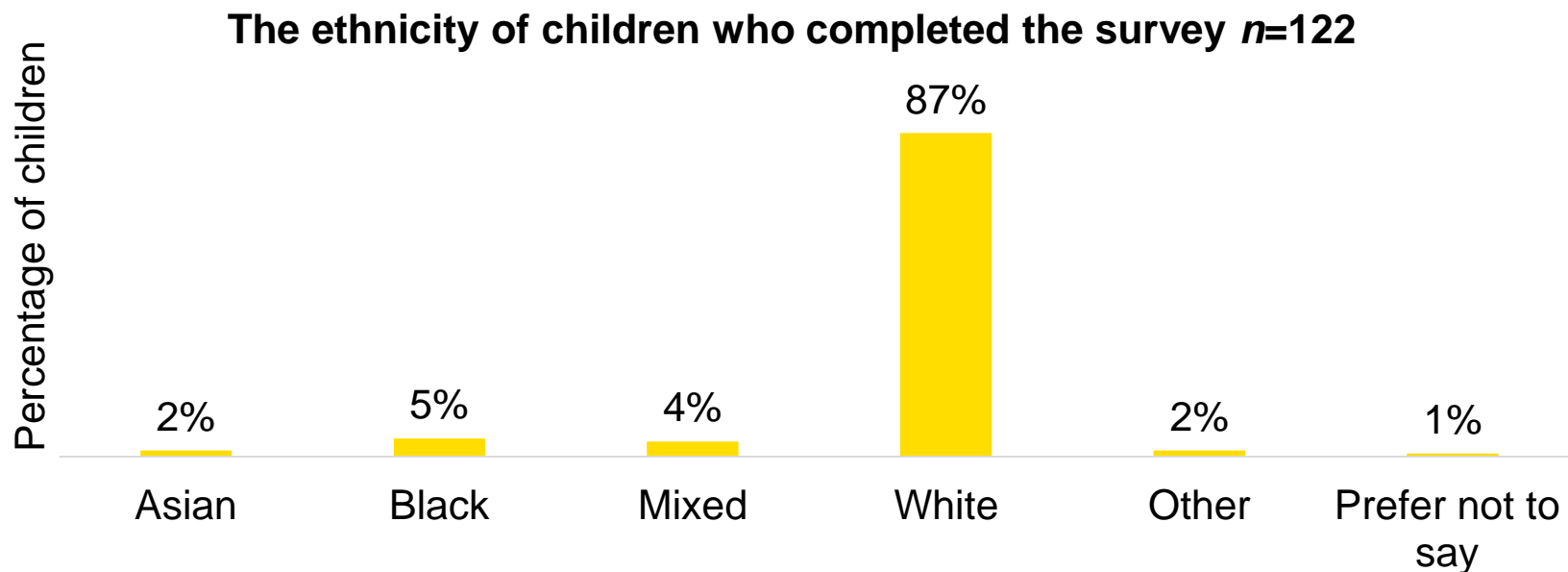
- In Swansea, 55% of the looked after population were boys. Therefore, boys were slightly under-represented in the survey responses.

Age group	Girls <i>n</i> (%)	Boys <i>n</i> (%)	Prefer not to say/no reply <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	2 (18%)	9 (82%)	
8-11yrs	17 (53%)	15 (47%)	
11-18yrs	39 (49%)	37 (47%)	3 (4%)
TOTAL	58 (48%)	61 (50%)	3 (2%)

Ethnicity

Minority ethnic children were slightly over-represented in the survey, as they made up about 8% of the care population in Swansea's statistical return to the Welsh government (2017) compared to 13% in our sample.

- The majority (87%) of children and young people who completed the survey described themselves as being of white ethnicity.



Placements

The responses probably under-represent those in foster care. Swansea's statistical return to government shows 79% in foster care. However, some of the kinship/ parent placements (34%) may have been formal foster carers, as only 7% are identified as kinship in the statistical return (STATWales, 2017).

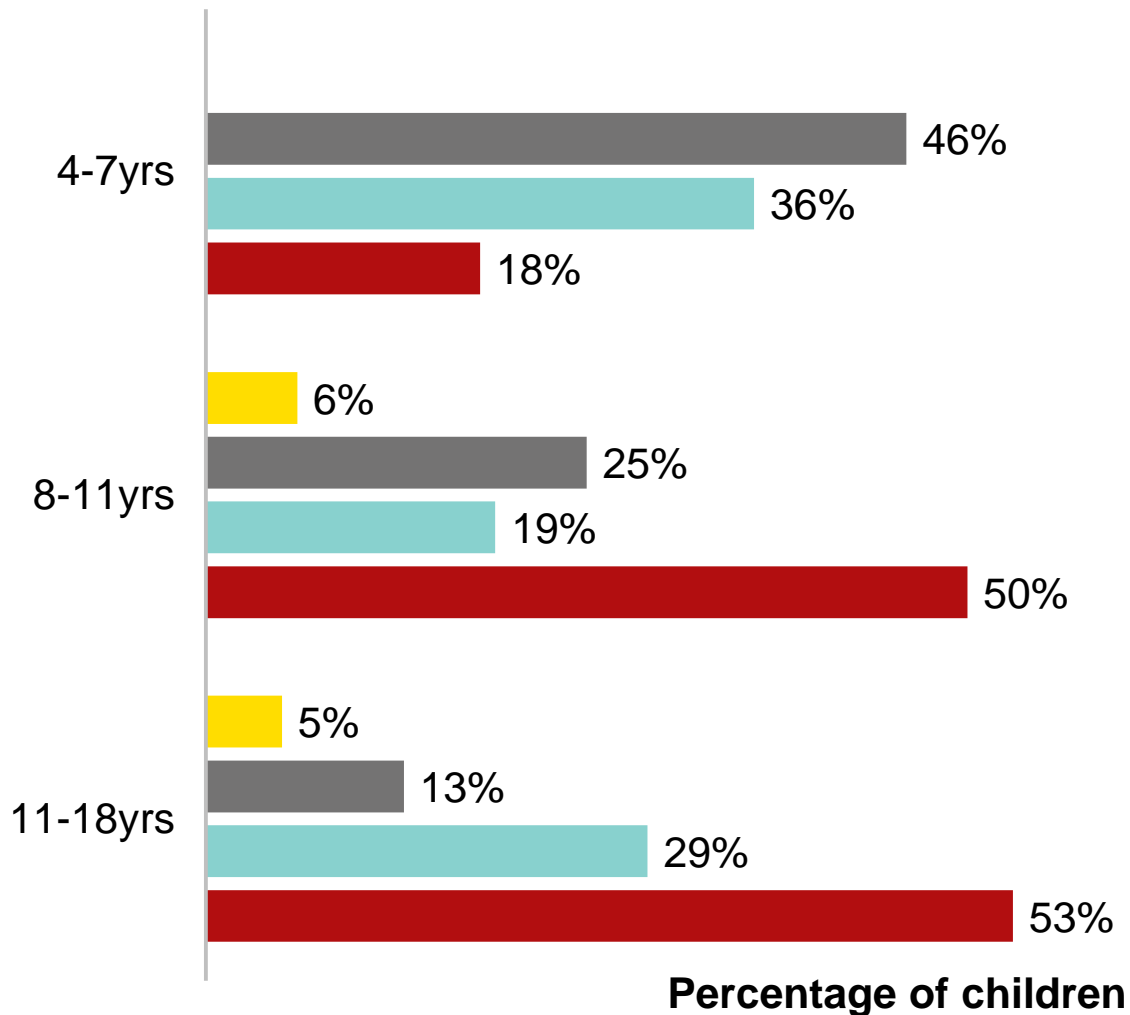
- The majority (52%) of children and young people were living in foster care.

Age group	Foster care <i>n</i> (%)	Family or friends care <i>n</i> (%)	Residential care <i>n</i> (%)	With parents <i>n</i> (%)	Somewhere else <i>n</i> (%)	Prefer not to say <i>n</i> (%)
4-7yrs	5 (45.5%)	5 (45.5%)	-	1 (9%)	-	-
8-11yrs	19 (60%)	10 (31%)	3 (9%)	-	-	-
11-18yrs	40 (51%)	19 (24%)	5 (6%)	6 (8%)	8 (10%)	1 (1%)
TOTAL	64 (52.4%)	34 (27.9%)	8 (6.6%)	7 (5.7%)	8 (6.6%)	1 (0.8%)

Length of time in care

How long have you been in care?

■ Don't know ■ Under a year ■ 1-3 years ■ 3 or more yrs





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.*

- 5 (18%) children (8-11yrs) and 8 (10%) young people (11-18yrs) had no face to face contact with *either* parent.
- Some of the children and young people's comments clarified that it was their choice not to see family members. Other children and young people wanted more contact or for the meeting not to be in "boring" contact centres.
- A slightly larger proportion of children and young people described contact with parents as 'just right' compared to looked after children in 5 other Welsh authorities.

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= 30	2 (7%)	15 (50%)	7 (23%)	6 (20%)	-----
	11-18yrs n=76	5 (7%)	38 (50%)	19 (25%)	14 (18%)	-----
Father 	8-11yrs n=28	1 (3%)	12 (43%)	3 (11%)	12 (43%)	-----
	11-18yrs n= 76	2 (3%)	17 (22%)	21 (28%)	36 (47%)	-----
Siblings 	8-11yrs n=24	7 (29%)	8 (33%)	2 (8%)	4 (17%)	3 (13%)
	11-18yrs n=77	9 (12%)	31 (40%)	23 (30%)	10 (13%)	4 (5%)

Family contact: 8-11yrs

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

- 20 children took the opportunity to write their thoughts and feelings about contact. Example quotes are shown below.

I am happy that I see them but I don't want to see them anymore.

I feel sad because I can't see my mum or dad.

I don't want to see my mum or my sister ever again.

I find contact with my mum at the contact centre boring. I would be happier if contact could be somewhere else.

Contact is better now that we are not meeting mum at the contact centre. We now do activities.

I don't want to see my mum. I have never seen my dad. He did have a choice to have us but he didn't want to.

Family contact: 11-18yrs

- 36 young people took the opportunity to write their thoughts and feelings about contact. Comments were a mix of asking for more contact, better quality contact or a statement that contact was not wanted. Example quotes are shown below.

I do not really want to see my mum that much. I really would like to see my siblings.

I like the amount of contact I get with my birth family.

Unfair that I cannot see my biological brother and sister ... because they were adopted.

I don't bother with them and don't want to see them.

I don't know my family very well.

I haven't seen my mother since September, it's been a long time.

I have contact with my mum and sisters once a month and that is too little for me. I have a 4 year old sister and it is worse for her.

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 had at least one good friend but 11 did not.
- The proportion (10%) of looked after young people without a good friend was higher than children in the general population where only 3% report being friendless.

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	11 (100%)	
8-11yrs	28 (93%)	2 (7%)
11-18yrs	66 (88%)	9 (12%)
TOTAL	105 (90%)	11 (10%)

Pets



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

Children and young people aged between 8-18yrs were asked if **they had a pet in the home they lived in.**

Focus group feedback

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.

General population: In Wales, 66% of households with a child (under the age of 19yrs), have a pet.

- 78% of children (8-11yrs) lived in a household with a pet.
- In the older (11-18yrs) group, 65% of young people had a pet where they lived. 19% without a pet wrote that they would have liked one.

Adults you live with: Continuity and 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	28%
2-4 placements	51%
5-7 placements	11%
8-10 placements	1%
11+placements	3%
Don't know	6%

Trust



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

Positive responses:

- 100% of children (4-7yrs);
- 93% of those aged 8-11yrs; and
- 92% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their carers.

*My aunty and uncle are really kind and keep me safe.
4-7yrs*

Social worker: Continuity and trust

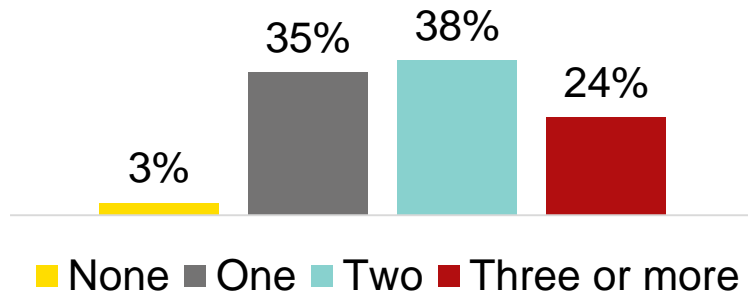
Changes in social workers



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

- 18 (24%) 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=110) who knew who their social worker was, were asked whether they *trusted their social worker.*

The level of trust in social workers was high amongst the younger children but decreased in the older age groups.

- 90% of children (4-7yrs);
- 83% of children (8-11yrs); and
- 86% of young people (11-18yrs) trusted their social worker.

I would like to go to places with my social worker and talk about my life and how it is going to be better.

11-18yrs



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?*

A turning point

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:
 - 100% of children (8-11yrs); and
 - 89% of the 11-18yrs young people.
- About one in ten young people did not have a trusted adult in their lives.

I am more safe and happy and settled because I trust them very much.
8-11yrs

Being trusted and helping out

Younger children (8-11yrs) were asked if they *got the chance to help the teacher*.

Focus group feedback

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.

- 23% of children (8-11yrs) responded that 'all or most of the time' they were asked to help and 67% answered 'sometimes'.
- Three children (10%) wrote that they 'hardly ever' or 'never' were given trusted roles in school.



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

Focus group feedback

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

- 44% of young people (11-18yrs) thought they were given opportunities 'all or most of the time' to show they could be trusted and 45% given them 'sometimes'.
- 11% felt they were 'hardly ever' or 'never' given the opportunity to be trusted.

Liking school



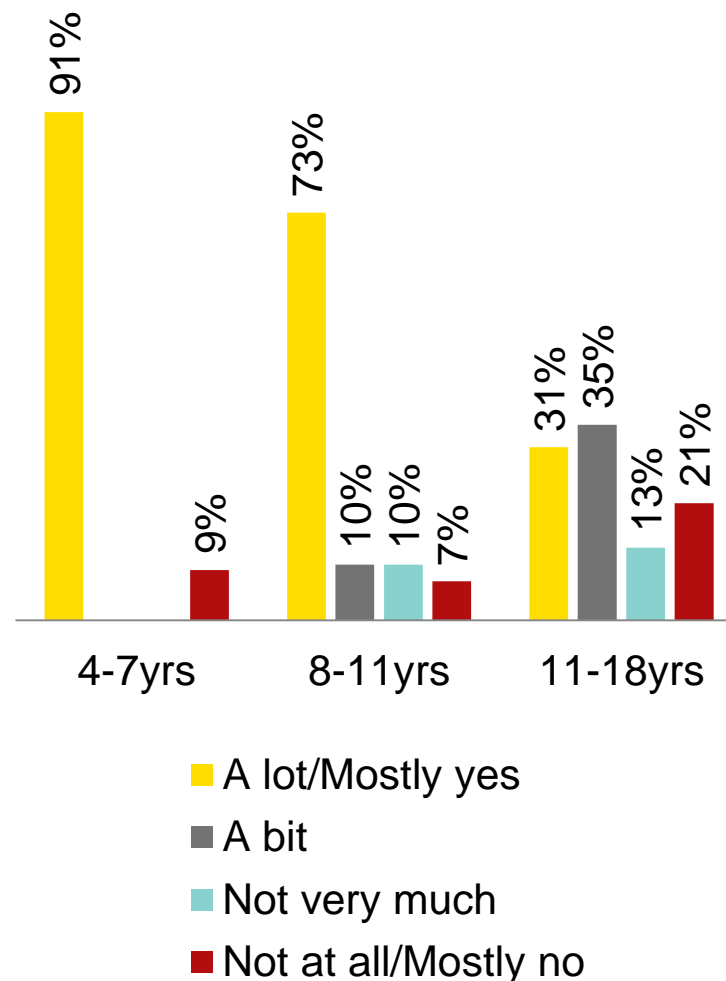
All the children and young people were asked how much they *liked school or college*.

General population: Liking school

The *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Survey* (Wales, 2015) of 5,335 young people (11-16yrs) reported that 73% liked school 'a lot' or 'a bit' and 27% '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.

- 66% of the 11-18yrs group liked school or college 'a lot' or 'a bit'.
- Fewer looked after young people liked school compared to 73% of young people in the Welsh population and looked after young people (71%) in other Welsh authorities.

Do you like school?



Adults you live with: Support for learning



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 young people in England* thought that their parents were interested in what happened at school.

- 100% of children (8-11yrs) and 92% young people (11-18yrs) recorded that the adults they lived with showed an interest in their education 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- Carers are doing a good job of supporting young people's learning. A slightly larger proportion (92%) of looked after young people felt their carers were interested in their education compared to 90% of young people in England*.

* Comparative data given for England as comparative data for Wales not available.

Having fun & hobbies

Children aged 4-7yrs and 8-11yrs 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*.

- The majority (96%) of children and young people did have fun and took part in activities outside school.

What would make care better?

Go to different places like the zoo.

11-18yrs

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	11 (100%)		
8-11yrs	24 (83%)	5 (17%)	
11-18yrs	48 (64%)	23 (31%)	4 (5%)
TOTAL	83 (72%)	28 (24%)	4 (4%)

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, and forests.

Focus group feedback

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. (National Survey for Wales – outdoor recreation, 2015)

- 100% of children (8-11yrs) and 82% of young people (11-18yrs) answered that they got the chance to explore the outdoors 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 13 (18%) young people were 'hardly ever' or 'never' given these opportunities.

Second chances

All children make mistakes and need a second or many more chances. It is part of learning and growing up.



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

Focus group feedback

Many children involved in the focus groups stated that looked after children were too readily refused a second chance.

- 52% responded 'all or most of the time';
- 36% answered 'sometimes'; and
- 12% thought they 'hardly ever' or 'never' got a second chance.

I'm thankful to my carers for the help ... I have a lot more help than I used to.
11-18yrs

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?*

Focus group feedback

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

- 87% of young people answered that they got to practice independence skills 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 13% thought this was 'hardly ever' or 'never' true.

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 Wales, 98% of households with children and two adults have an Internet connection. 90% of single parents have an Internet connection. (National Survey for Wales, 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 Report, 2014)

- The *majority* (91%) of young people reported that they did have access to the Internet in their placement.
- Seven (9%) young people could not connect to the Internet in their placement: a much larger proportion than the 2% of households with children in the Welsh population with no connection.



4. Rights

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

Included in decision-making

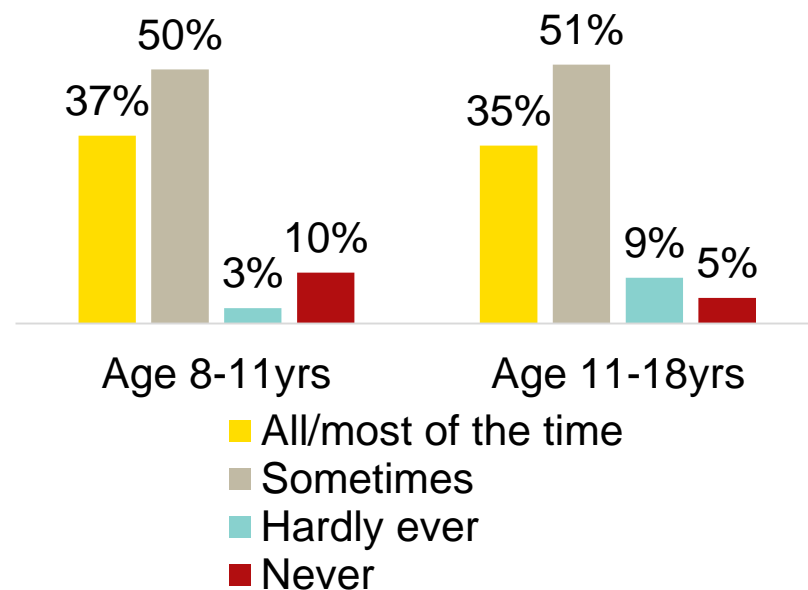


Children aged 8-18yrs were asked, *do you feel included in the decisions that social workers make about your life?*

- 87% of 8-11yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.
- 86% of 11-18yrs 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' felt included.

I would like to be in more meetings and know what is going to happen.
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.

- 13% of young people recorded that adults did things that made them feel embarrassed about being in care.

People sometimes say things that suggest I am different to others.
11-18yrs

Making a big deal about the fact that I'm in care.
11-18yrs

I don't like having visits. I live with my gran. I will be pleased when I don't have a social worker any more.
11-18yrs

Feeling safe in placement

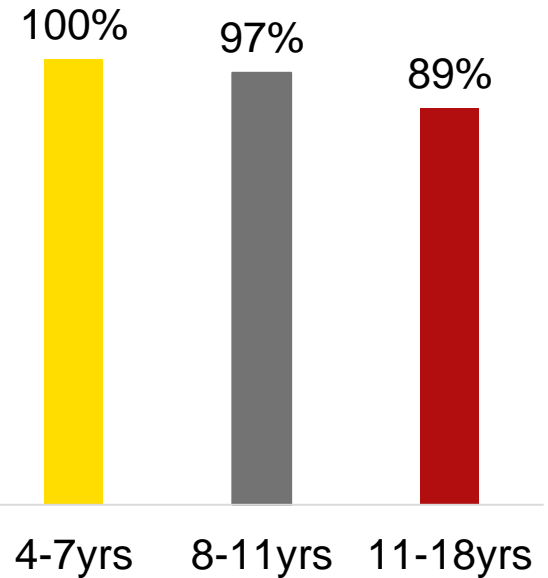
bright spots



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.

- All of the children aged 4-7yrs felt safe.
- One child (8-11yrs) and 9 young people (11-18yrs) ticked the 'sometimes', 'hardly ever' or 'never' boxes.
- Overall, 92% of children and young people reported that they felt safe 'all or most of the time' in their placements – a larger proportion than children in the general population (75%) and other young people (86%) in care. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

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

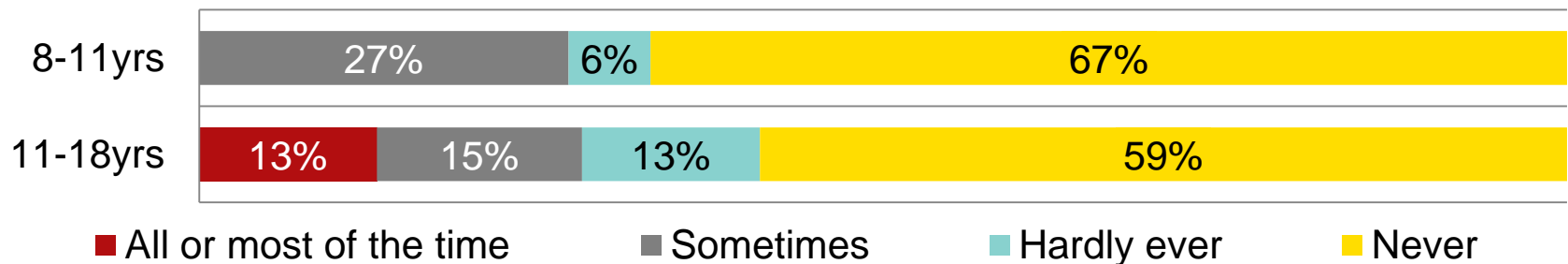
Our question asked whether *children felt afraid of going to school because of bullying* and if they were bullied were they *getting support from an adult*.

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 10% of children in Wales report that they are regularly bullied at school. (ONS, 2016b)

- 8 (2%) children (8-11yrs) reported being afraid to go to school 'sometimes' because of bullying. All of them felt they were getting support from an adult to stop the bullying.
 - Nine young people (11-18yrs) were afraid 'all or most of the time' and a further 11 'sometimes'. A quarter of these young people felt they were not being supported by an adult.
- More looked after young people (13%) were afraid of bullying in comparison with young people (10%) living in Wales.

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 who their current social worker was*.

- Overall 6% of children and young people did not know their social worker.

Age group	Know social worker <i>n (%)</i>	Don't know social worker <i>n (%)</i>
4-7yrs	10 (91%)	1 (9%)
8-11yrs	29 (97%)	1 (3%)
11-18yrs	71 (93%)	5 (7%)
TOTAL	110 (94%)	7 (6%)

Contact with social workers



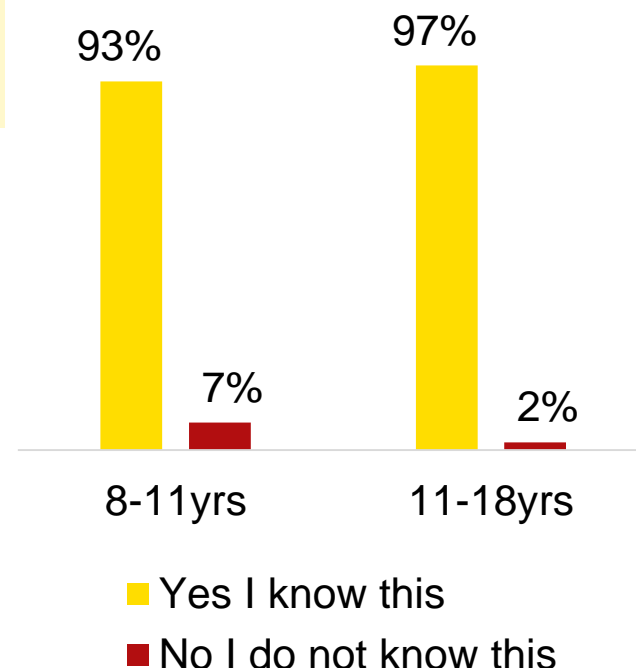
Young people (n=110) who knew their social worker were asked how *easy it was to contact them*.



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

- 73% of young people (11-18yrs) reported that they could easily get in touch with their social worker 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'.
- 19 (27%) young people could 'hardly ever' or 'never' get in touch with their social worker.
- 93% of children (8-11yrs) and 98% of those aged 11-18yrs 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?





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



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

Important for recovery

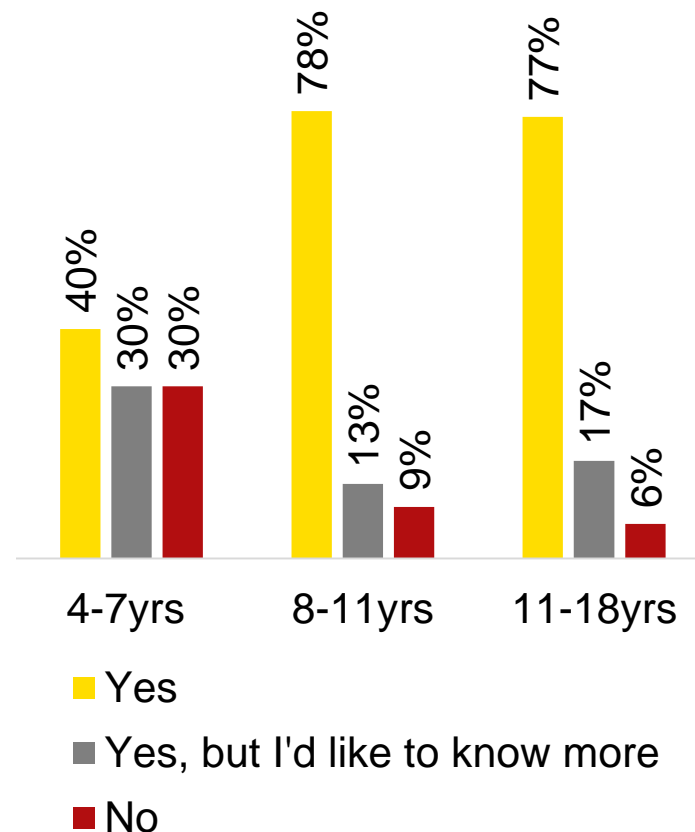
Having a coherent account of one's history and understanding the reasons that led to becoming looked after are important in the development of an integrated identity and in recovery from abuse and neglect.

(Adshead, 2012; Adler, 2012)

- Only 40% of the children (4-7yrs) felt they had understood enough about why they were in care. Children's understanding increased with age.

- In Swansea a larger proportion of young people aged 11-18yrs (77%) thought they had been given an explanation of why they were in care compared to young people (71%) in other Welsh authorities. This is a Bright Spot of practice.

Has someone explained to you why you are in care?



Feeling settled in placement

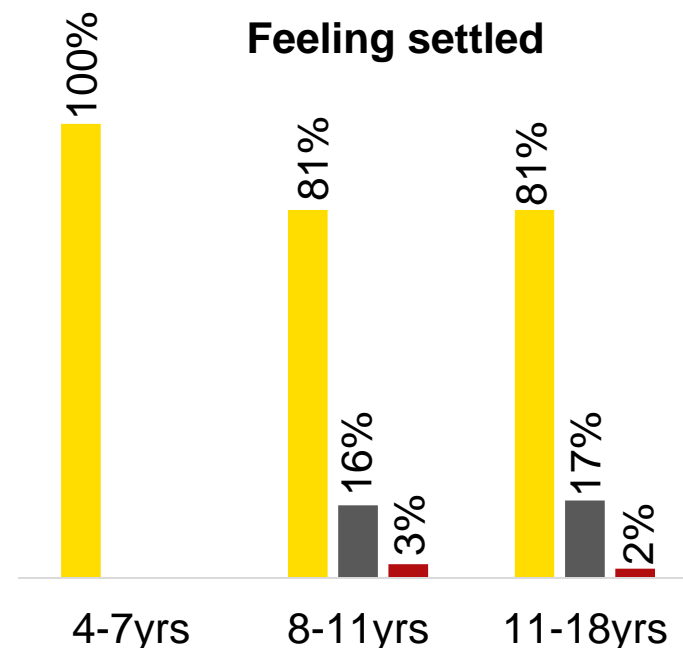


The surveys asked about children's sense of belonging: whether they felt at ease in their placements. Based on the advice from our focus groups, children and young people were asked:

*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'.

- Compared to other looked after young people (73%) in Wales, more (81%) young people in Swansea (11-18yrs) felt settled in their placements. This is a Bright Spot of practice.



- All or most of the time/Mostly yes
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever/Never/Mostly no

Liking bedrooms



Children and young people were asked if **they liked their bedroom..**

Focus group feedback

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.

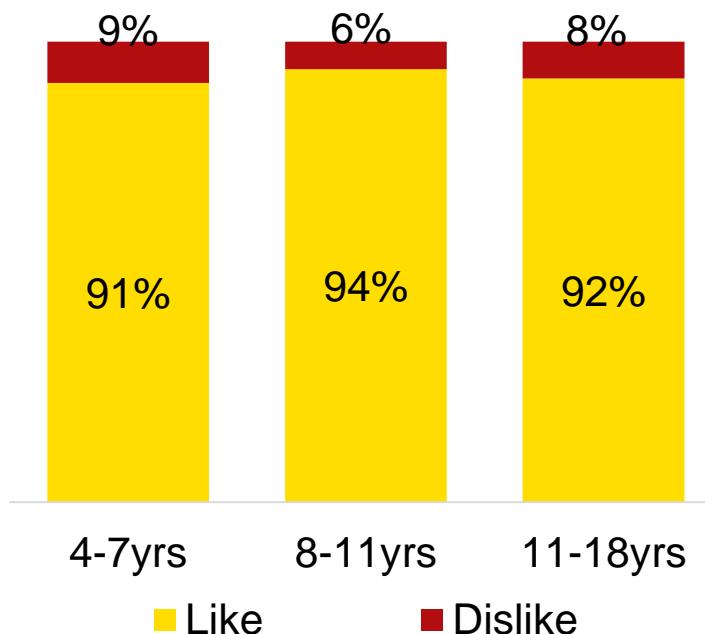
It was linked to safety, a sense of identity and feeling a sense of belonging.

- The vast majority of children and young people liked their bedrooms.

I like my room but I'd like to have a place to put my console.
4-7yrs

What would make care better?
Not sharing a bedroom with my brother.
8-11yrs

Do you like your bedroom?



Adults you live with: Sensitive parenting



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

- 100% of children (4-7yrs) and 100% of children (8-11yrs) thought their carers noticed how they were feeling 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes'. This is a Bright Spot of practice.
- Slightly fewer but still positively 89% of young people (11-18yrs) felt their carers noticed how they were feeling.

*I like my carer
cooking for me.
My carer is kind.*
4-7yrs

*I am more safe and
happy and settled
because I trust them
(carers) very much.*
8-11yrs

Adults you live with: Sharing confidences



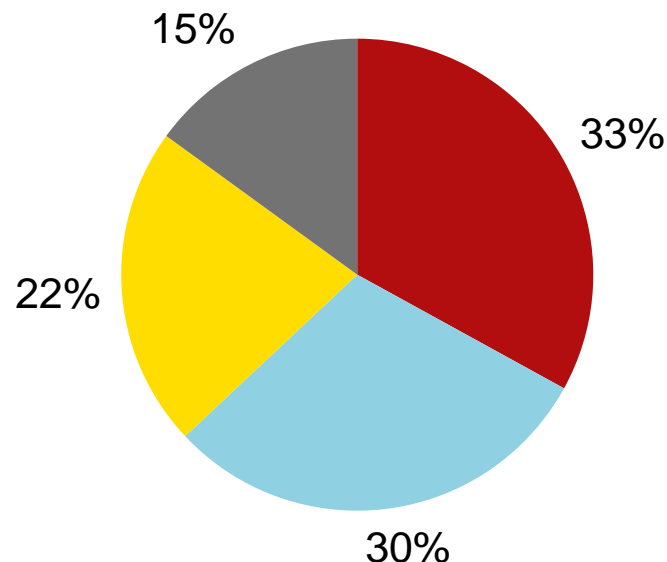
Young people were asked how frequently they *talked to the adults that they lived with about the things that mattered to them.*

General population

The UK *Understanding Society* survey (2017) found that 65% of children (10-15yrs) talked regularly to a parent.

- 63% of young people talked regularly with their carers about things that mattered to them. That is a similar proportion to the 65% of young people in the general population who talk to their parents.

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 Wales about 17% of children have concerning SDQ scores that suggest they have a clinical level of mental health difficulties. (Statistical Bulletin, 2017)

- Three (10%) children (8-11yrs) worried 'all or most of the time' and 14 (47%) 'sometimes'. Just one child felt they were not getting help with their worries.
- 9 (12%) young people (11-18yrs) worried 'all or most of the time' and 40 (58%) 'sometimes'.
- 31% of young people (11-18yrs) thought they were *not* getting help with their worries. The majority of looked after young people report worrying in all local authorities but in those authorities fewer young people (25%) feel they are not being helped.

Parity with peers



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

- 85% of young people reported that 'all or most of the time' or 'sometimes' they were able to do similar things to their friends.
- 11 (15%) young people reported that they could 'hardly ever' or 'never' do similar things to their friends.

What would make care better?

Be able to do what normal teenagers do like going out.
11-18yrs

I think there are too many rules for foster children in the system, e.g. children not being allowed on holiday and stuff like that.

8-11yrs

Happiness with appearance



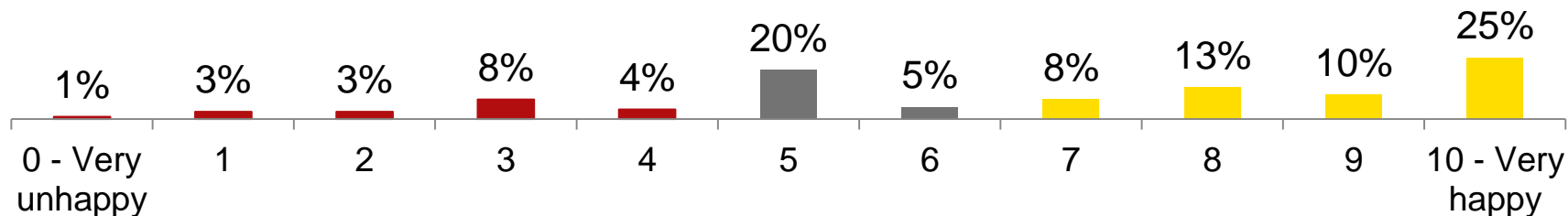
Studies have shown that poor body image is associated with low self-esteem, depression and self-harm. (Cash and Smolek, 2011)

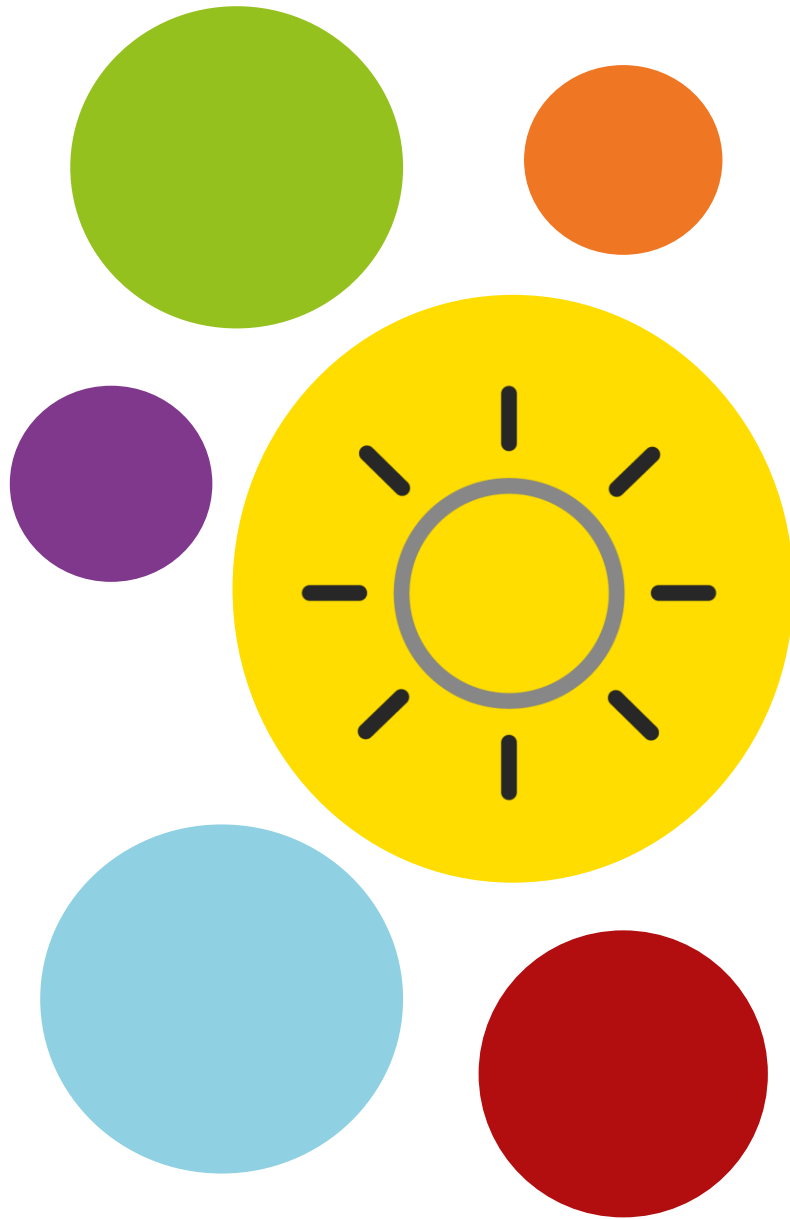
General population: Happiness with appearance

- 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)

- The majority of young people were happy with their appearance.
- On this scale scores of 0-4 show low happiness and this applied to 19% of the young people.

How happy are you with the way you look?





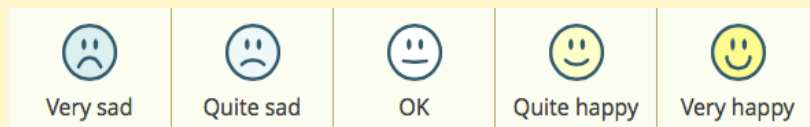
6. Well-being

- Happiness yesterday – affect
- Life satisfaction – overall evaluation
- Life is worthwhile – psychological/eudemonic well-being
- Life is improving
- Positivity about the future

Happiness

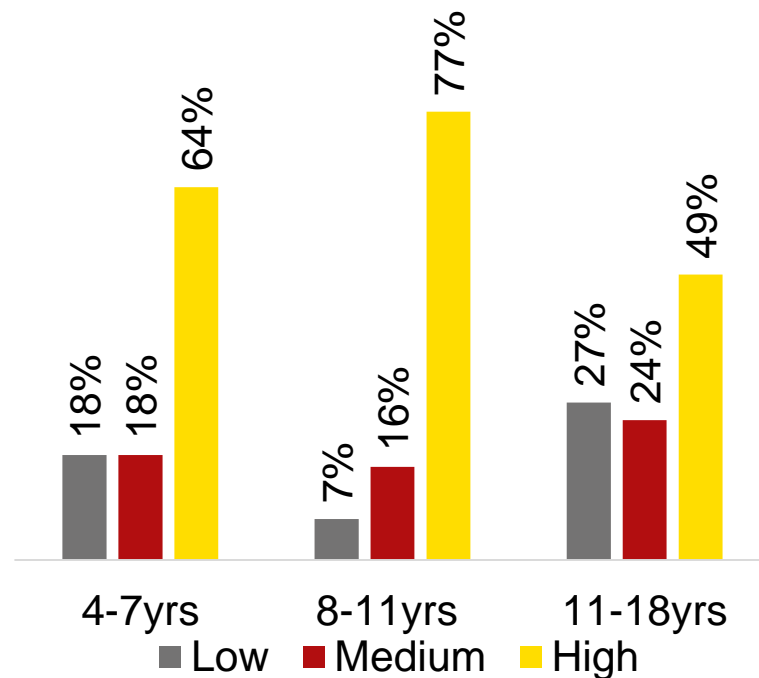
The decrease in happiness with age occurs in all surveys. Well-being decreases from school year 5 onwards with age 14-15yrs being the lowest point. It then starts to rise again. (Rees *et al.*, 2010)

- 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.
- 4 (18%) children and 20 (27%) young people reported that yesterday they had been 'quite sad' or 'very sad'.

Happiness yesterday



Life satisfaction

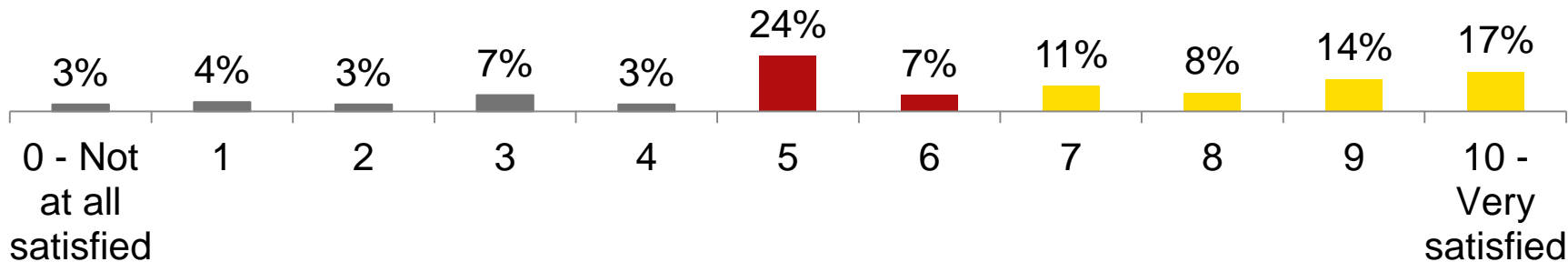


Young people (11-18yrs) were asked *how satisfied they were with their life* on a 0-10 scale.

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)

- Just like the general child population in England there was a positive correlation between high life satisfaction scores and being happy at school.
- 20% of young people had low scores on the life satisfaction scale.

How satisfied are you with your life?



NB: percentages add up to more than 100% because of rounding

Are the things you do worthwhile?

Young people (11-18yrs) were asked if the things they do are worthwhile.

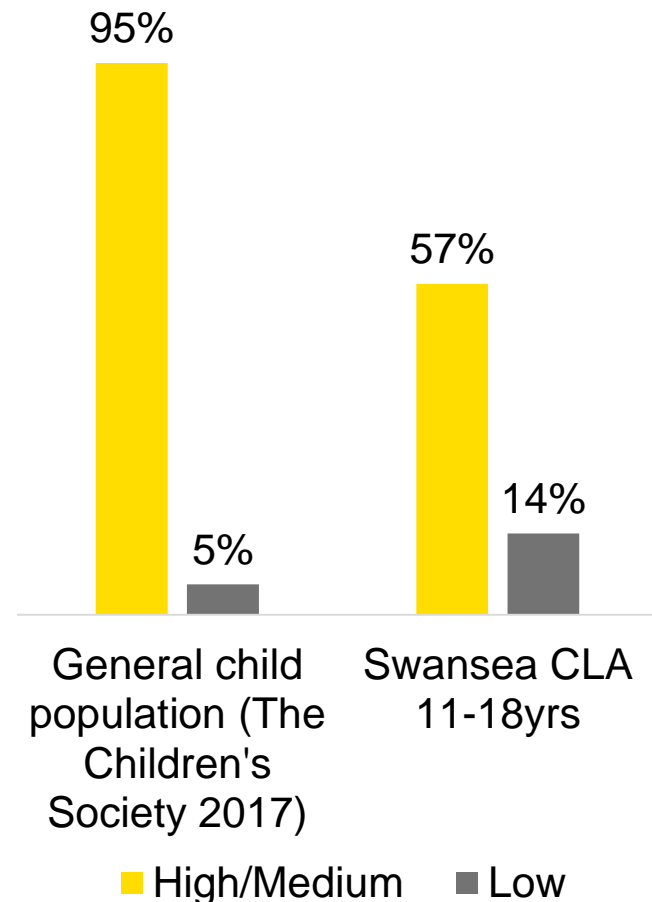
Importance of purpose

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.

- 57% of young people scored high or very high;
- 29% medium; and
- 14% low – feeling that the things they did were not worthwhile.

To what extent do you think the things you do in your life are worthwhile?



Positivity about the future



Young people were asked on a scale of 0-10 *how positive they were about the future?*

Links to happiness

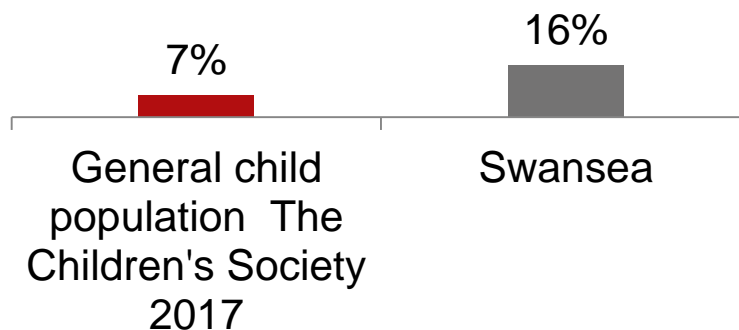
Optimism about the future is linked with happiness and resilience. (Conversano et al., 2010).

- 51 (68%) were positive about their future.
- 12 (16%) had moderate scores
- 12 (16%) had low scores and were pessimistic about their future.

I feel worried about turning 18. I don't feel my social worker has put enough plans in place for my move on and I am scared about what will happen to me.

11-18yrs

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



Comparisons

Levels of well-being – Swansea’s looked after young people (11-18yrs) compared to peers (10-17yrs) in the general population in Wales (ONS, 2016) and to the average scores of looked after young people in six Welsh LAs.

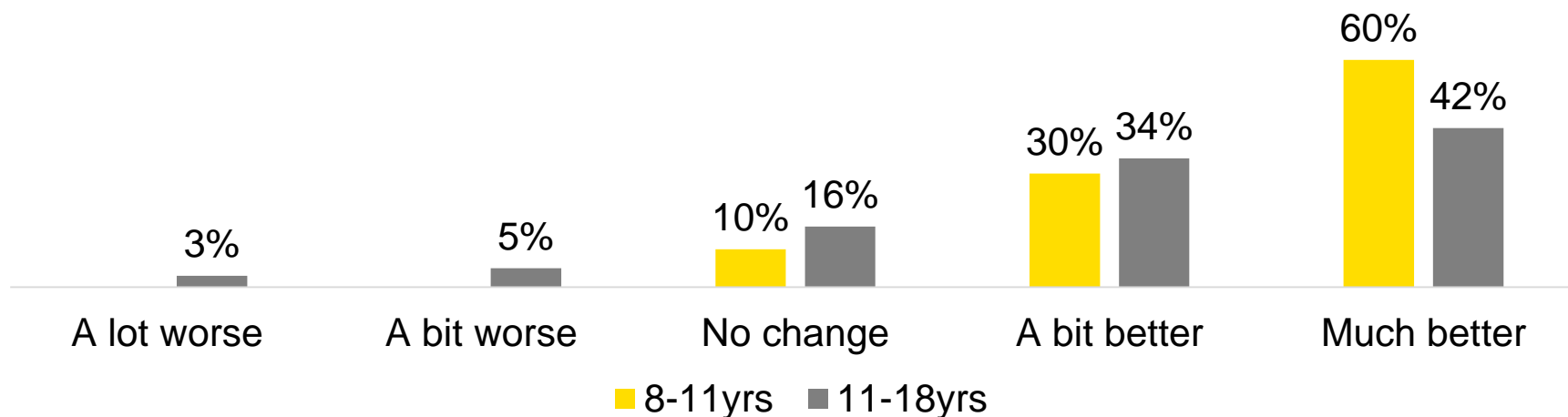
		Swansea	2018 average in 6 Welsh LAs	Peers in general population (10-17yrs)
		%	%	%
Life satisfaction	High scores	51%	55%	80%
	Low scores	19%	17%	8%
Happiness yesterday	High scores	49%	55%	74%
	Low scores	27%	23%	13%
Things done are worthwhile	High scores	57%	62%	75%
	Low scores	14%	12%	11%
Positive about future	High scores	68%	65%	-
	Low scores	16%	13%	-

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'.

- 80% of children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs) felt that their lives were improving.

Is life improving?



Well-being: 4-7yrs



- Two (18%) of the children in the 4-7yrs group described themselves as 'very sad'.
- The two children did not give many negative responses in the survey but they
 - did not have a good understanding of why they were in care;
 - one did not trust the social worker; and
 - the other child wanted to return home.
- Neither of the two children's responses indicated that they had low well-being.

Well-being: 8-11 yrs



- Two (7%) of the children in the 8-11yrs group described themselves as 'very sad'.
- One child seemed to be very sad at not being able to have contact with all their siblings.
- The other child had a lot of worries and was unsure why they were in care.
- However, other responses such as 'always' feeling safe and trusting carers were very positive.
- Neither of the two children's responses indicated that they had low well-being.

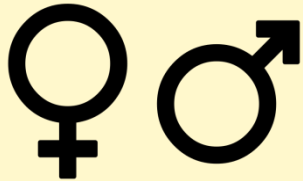
*I know sometimes I
can get emotional. I
like to cry ... by myself
rather than with
friends. I speak to my
foster carer about it.
8-11yrs*

Well-being: 11-18yrs



- 16 (22%) 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 gave many negative responses. The strongest statistical effect size associated with low well-being was young people who did not like their appearance followed by not having a good friend.
- Also associated with low well-being was young people:
 - without a trusted adult in their lives;
 - not liking school;
 - not being given opportunities to be trusted;
 - feeling the stigma of care;
 - not feeling settled in placement; and
 - not having the right frequency of contact with mothers.

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 than boys to not like their appearance and to feel that it was difficult to get in touch with their social workers.



- Boys were more likely than girls to report being afraid to go to school because of bullying.



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

- Six of the youngest children gave text responses on, *what would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- The majority wrote that they were happy and liked living with their carers.

I want to go to my house not in (name of carer) house.

What would make care better?
For my sister to be good.

I don't like coming to school sometimes but I like it on the days we have nurture.

I like having pocket money. I like having new clothes and new things to bring to school. I like my carer cooking for me. My carer is kind.

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

- 18 (56%) children gave text responses on, *what would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 10 children wrote that there was nothing they wanted to change
- Other children wrote about wanting changes to their contact arrangements

What would make care better?
Less seeing my half sister (name).

What would make care better?
Included more.

What would make care better?
Seeing my family more often.

I am happy in care because I don't get beaten.

Nothing could make it better.

What would make care better?
If I could have my brother back living with me permanently.

What could make care better: 11-18yrs

- 45 (57%) young people gave text responses on, *what would make care better/ anything else you want to say?*
- 13 young people recorded that there was nothing they wanted to change or that they were ok.
- Other young people wrote that they would like more contact with their family, and more involvement with their social worker.

Not having so many social workers would have made it easier.

I live on my own so this wasn't very relevant to me.

If they listened to me a bit better :)

Seeing my brothers and sisters more.

I feel my social worker is not making enough effort with my family.

See my mother more.

Other comments: 11-18yrs

It is the best experience I have had in a life time and I wish my carer had looked after me since I was born and that people like me are very lucky that they have someone to look after them and give them food and make sure you are clean and healthy.

I used to get bullied because I didn't live with my parents and no one helped me but then it got better so I think it would be good if young people like me could spread their story everywhere.

I love being in care.

My care experience has been shit. When I first when into care the amount of social workers I have had are unbelievable, the amount of houses I got moved to are stupid... Some places have been alright but most have been awful. You ... really need to change because you don't realise the kids that come in to care end up having a shit life because you don't offer most things at the end of the day



Section 5: Positive aspects of practice and areas for improvement

What's working well

- Placements in Swansea are safe places for most children and young people. All of the youngest children (4-7yrs) and nearly all aged 8-18yrs felt settled and safe where they lived. A larger proportion of young people (11-18yrs) felt safe and settled compared to looked after young people in other authorities in Wales, and compared to children in the general population.
- Relationships with carers are also very positive. Nearly all children and young people felt that their carers noticed how they were feeling. Similar proportions of young people (63%) talked regularly to their carers about things that mattered, as young people in the general population and a greater proportion (92%) felt their carers were interested in what they did at school or college.
- Adults are doing a good job of explaining the reasons for being in care to children (8-11yrs) and young people (11-18yrs). Compared with other local authorities in Wales, a greater proportion (77%) of young people answered that they had had an explanation.
- Most looked after children in Swansea felt their lives were getting better. This was reported by 90% of children (8-11yrs) and 76% of young people (11-18yrs).

What could be improved

- **Regularly review contact plans and listen to children's views about contact with immediate and extended family members, making clear the reasons for decisions about contact.**
- **Explore why 29% of children (8-11yrs) wanted less contact with their siblings.** For example, are these children in the same placement as their siblings? Do they need a targeted intervention to reduce sibling conflict? Consider the use of independent visitors for those with no parental contact.
- **Find out why some young people (11-18yrs), especially boys, had negative feelings about school.** The proportion (66%) of young people (11-18yrs) liking school in Swansea was smaller than looked after young people in other Welsh authorities (71%) and young people (73%) in the Welsh population.
- **Continue to work with schools to keep children and young people safe from bullying.** More than a quarter (28%) of looked after young people were afraid to go to school because of bullying, and a quarter of them did not feel supported.
- **Explore how young people (11-18yrs) can be supported with concerns about their feelings and behaviour.** 31% of young people did not feel they were getting support for worries that they had about their lives.
- **Understand the reasons why a quarter of young people (11-18yrs), especially girls, found it difficult to get in touch with their social worker.**
- **Ensure that all younger children (4-7yrs) understand why they are in care.** 60% of this age group wanted to know more, or felt that nobody had explained to them why they were in care.



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For enquiries about the Bright Spots project see:
<http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/professional-zone/bright-spots>

or contact:

brightspots@coramvoice.org.uk



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