



**LOOKED AFTER
CHILDREN'S COUNCIL**

Voice & Influence Report
Looked After & Leaving Care
Young People's Feedback
October 2015

Equity

'the quality of being fair and impartial'

Young People Making a Positive Contribution to Rotherham
Looked After & Leaving Care Services

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Introduction

Over the past six months Lisa Du-Valle has been working with the Looked After Children's Council to support them in engaging in Voice & Influence opportunities. Part of the Voice & Influence process was specifically focussed on actively engaging Looked After and Leaving Care young people in giving their voices to shape Rotherham Services through consultations and discussions around things that matter to them including the LAC Sufficiency Strategy, Corporate LAC Promise, developing the S Word Leaflet, supporting the C&YP Commissioning Strategy 2013-2016 (easy read version) and helped to develop the mymindmatters website. Develop the LAC Promise and deliver the LAC Summit.

One of the early tasks for the LAC Council (LACC) was to design a basic feedback tool where Looked After and Leaving Care Young People (LA&LC) could have their say about their perceptions and experiences of living in care or leaving care. Members of the LACC decided this year's theme would be '**equity**' as they were curious whether other young people felt they were treated equally to non-looked after and leaving care young people by those around them. This theme created much debate amongst the LAC Council who eventually settled upon a set of questions they wanted to ask their peers. Collectively they created the LA & LC 'Have Your Say' feedback form (see appendix B).

This young person friendly feedback form was deliberately designed with 4 basic questions for speed of completion and easy comprehension to maximise potential completion. Special attention was taken with developing the HYS form design so visually it would be attractive to other young people. The 4 questions asked were:-

- Q1. Do you feel that you are treated the same as other young people around you who aren't in care? (please explain)*
- Q2. Are there any times where you feel less valued than young people who aren't in care or leaving care? For example, places you go or people you are around*
- Q3. What do you think would make young people who feel differently feel the same as those who aren't in care or leaving care?*
- Q4. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about being in care or leaving care?*

Distribution of the 'Have Your Say' feedback forms was supported this year by Service Managers who provided £100 worth of prizes to be used as incentives to complete the feedback form, they also posted out blanks to all looked after young people from Rotherham and emailed HYS forms to all leaving care workers to support completion with young people they work with on behalf of the LACC. Alongside the LAC Council members self-completion, in total 69 completed forms were returned to the LAC Council.

The 69 HYS feedback forms were quantitatively analysed (see appendix A) then analysed using thematic analysis by the Looked After Children's Council. Recommendations for the improvement of the Looked After Children and Leaving Care are drawn from the analysis of young people's feedback and further discussions with the Looked After Children's Council.

This Voice & Influence feedback report is being submitted to Ian Thomas, Interim strategic Director for CYPS, and Jane Parfremment, Director of Safeguarding Children & Families, to be genuinely considered by these directors and the Looked After Children's Teams. It is anticipated that the voices of these looked after and leaving care young people will inform future strategic planning.

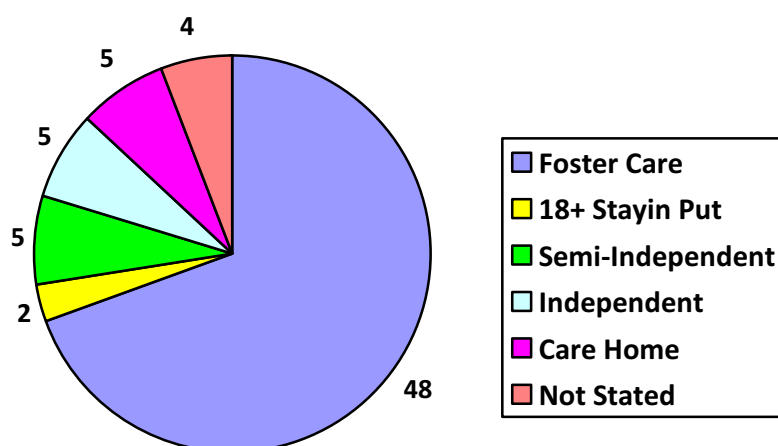
Young People's Voices around Equity LAC 'Have Your Say' Feedback Findings

The LA&LC 'Have Your Say' (HYS) feedback form was completed by 69 looked after and leaving care young people from Rotherham about their perceptions and experiences of 'equity' whilst living in the care system. These forms were completed during the period June and September 2015 inclusively.

Out of those 69 participants, 35 were male and 34 female. The majority of participants measuring 59, described themselves as White British, 7 as Dual Heritage, 2 as Pakistani, 1 as British Asian and 1 described herself as from Czech Republic. All were aged between 10 and 22 years old.

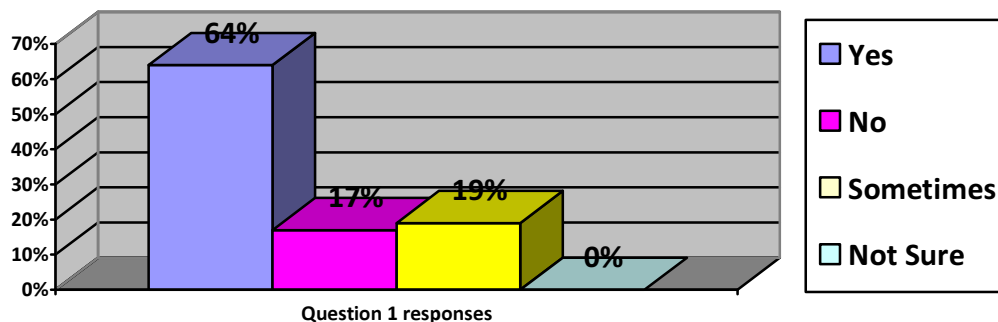
Living Arrangement Breakdown of 69 Young People:-

Young participants had a broad range of living arrangements based in Rotherham and out of local authority. 28 of these were living out of Rotherham and 41 were living within Rotherham.



All 69 participants who completed the Voice and Influence 'Have Your Say' forms were asked four basic questions about their experiences and perceptions of 'equity' when living as a Rotherham Looked After Child. Below is a breakdown of their responses to each question and examples of young people's voices:-

Q1. *Do you feel that you are treated the same as other young people around you who aren't in care? (please explain)*



'64% felt Yes we were treated the same!'

From those 64% of young people who felt they were treated the same as other young people, further thematic analysis indicated that this was largely due to perceptions around equity of activities and outings experienced, opportunities provided, feelings of belonging, material possessions in comparison with non-looked after peers and doing 'ordinary' things. Here are some examples:-

'Yes, because I got to do lots of activities and outing like anyone else'
(13 year old, male, St Bedes)

'Yes I do 'cos my carers give me the opportunities to be independent. Also, I am treated like a son at my current foster care' (18 year old, male, Foster Care, Doncaster)

'Yes, because they take you like family' (11 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Yes because they get the same things as me.... Like a TV, Xbox, anything!'
(14 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Yes, because when for instance I wanted to go round at my friends house I can do that like a ordinary person. And it feels Nice to do what people around you do to'
(13 year old, female, Foster Care, Doncaster)

'36% - said we are Not Always treated the same!'

Thematic analysis from those 17% of 'No' answers, and 19% of those who responded 'Sometimes' revealed that responses for the two options were indistinguishable from each other so were placed together. Collectively these 36% who felt they were not being treated the same either always or sometimes as other non-looked after young people, expressed reasons around LAC having to live apart from their biological families, having much stricter rules and control imposed upon them than their peers and having to deal with other people's negative perceptions of a looked after child and however well-meaning being treated 'special' is, this is not always appreciated by the young person who wants to blend in and be the same:-

'No, because they live at home whit there Mum an Dad and I'm in care whit random people'
(13 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'No, because they are not your real family and not the same blood'
(17 year old, male, Notts)

'No, feel I'm treated differently, like people are trying to control me more than kids not in care are 'controlled' '
(18 year old, female, Foster Care, Worksop)

'No, I feel that rules are strickter for LAC than children at home'
(12 year old, male, Foster Care Rotherham)

'No, like in school teachers give me more of a leaway than other kids.... Treat me special and I don't want to be treated special I want to be a normal child'
(15 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Sometimes, because at school I don't get treated like students should at our school. But at my care home with foster parents and here at LAC Council I always get treated the same'
(14 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

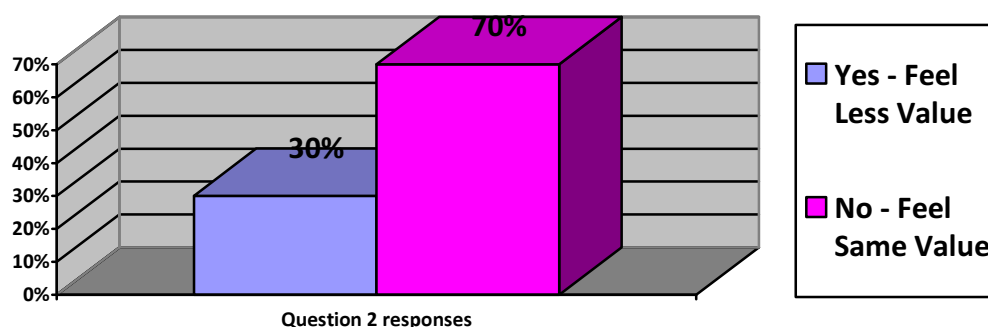
'Sometimes I receive special care & respect from people due to my circumstances and they pitty me... which I hate!' (18 year old, female, Semi Independent, Rotherham)

'Sometimes, it depends where I am. Home = Yes School = No'
(12 year old, female, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'No, I am the only one in care in my class' (11 year old, male, Foster Care, Hull)

'Sometimes, 'cos people out of care get help off parents/family/friends – we get help off people we don't really know or know us at eric manns or bridges'
(19 year old, female, semi-independent, Rotherham)

Q2. *Are there any times when you feel less valued than young people who aren't in care or leaving care? For example, places you go or people you are around*



'30% - of LAC young people feel they are not the same value as their peers due to their looked after status'

Thematic analysis from those 30% of young people who felt of less value than other young people due to their looked after status, revealed this was due to perceptions around inequity of treatment from foster carers in comparison with their own biological children, inequality of treatment for LAC within schools and basic inequity that young people have experienced poor care from their biological parents whereas other young people have not making them feel of less value. In addition feelings that being in care is a punishment for individuals is evident as they can't see their biological parents/families every day like other 'normal' young people when the young person hasn't done anything wrong. Here are some examples:-

'I'm not allowed to stay at home whilst they (foster carers) are on holiday but their own son is'
(18 year old, female, Foster Care Worksop)

'Sometimes I feel like people find it easy to reject me because they know I've been rejected before and I can handle it so it doesn't matter... Like I don't count'
(18 year old, female, semi-independent, Rotherham)

'I'm obviously not the same value cos u don't get to see your family every day. It's like you are in prison and everyone else can see their parents'
(15 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Sometimes because I think of others parents, and thinking about mine (that they were no good) but then I think about others parents, and thinking about how much they value and love them, whereas mine don't (or didn't) so that's why I sometimes feel less valued than others'
(12 year old, female, Foster Care, Doncaster)

'They (social care) have moved me a lot of times and I have not been able to see family members as I should be able to.... I don't feel like people listen to me as much (as if they would if I wasn't a looked after child)'
(18 year old, female, semi-independent, Rotherham)

'70% - feel they have the same value as their peers who are not living in the care of the local authority'

Thematic analysis from those 70% of young people who perceived themselves to have the same value as their peers indicated this was due to being treated the same as other young people in their foster care placement, their schools and having the same opportunities as other young people or no-one knowing they were living in care. Here are some examples:-

'I feel valued because they treat me the same'

(12 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'I always feel the same value as any other young person'

(13 year old, male, St Bedes)

'I feel like I am living with my real parents that's how GREAT Tina and Paul are to me!!!!'

(13 year old, female, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Not at all to be honest I feel Better Because I get more attention and focus and get to go where I want if staff available'

(16 year old, male, Residential, Retford)

'Everyone treats me like I am normal whether I am in care or not'

(17 year old, female, Sherburn in Elmet)

'I feel valued 'cos being in an Asian family is nice I feel like I'm wanted at weddings and people listen to what I want to say'

(10 year old, female, Foster Care, Rotherham)

Interestingly, two comments within this category felt they had the same value partly due to no-one knowing they were a looked after child:-

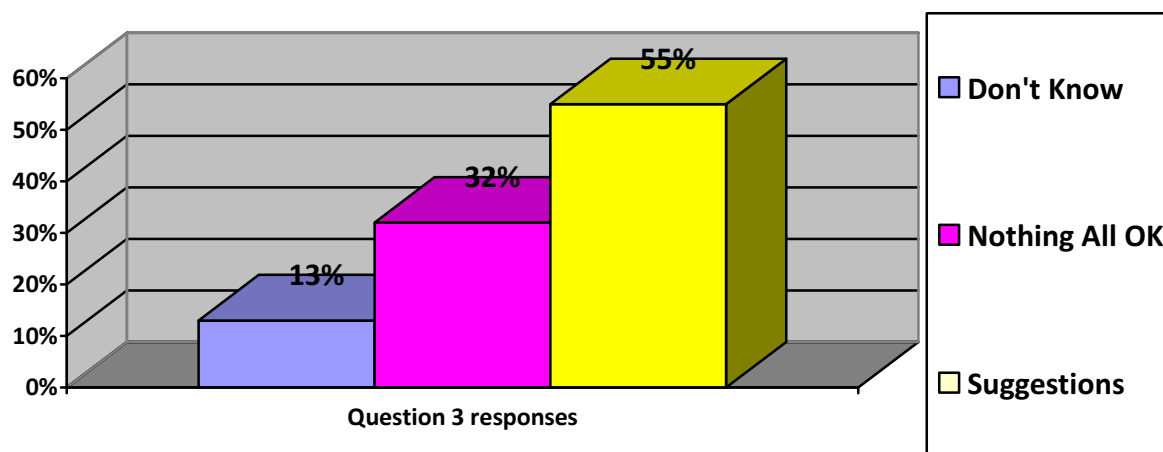
'I feel the same value, I'm not treated any differently to anyone else I think this is because I haven't told anyone I'm in care'

(13 year old, female, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'I am the same value. My friends don't know so it isn't a problem'

(12 year old, female, Foster Care, Rotherham)

Q3. What do you think would make young people who feel differently feel the same as those who aren't in care or leaving care?



'55% - Voiced suggestions to improve the quality of experiences for LAC young people'

Thematic analysis by the LAC Council indicated that young people felt greater opportunities to have a better social life including greater access to social media, spend more time with family, to have more independence and increased privacy may help those young people who don't feel they are treated the same or have same value as non-looked after children.

'If I was allowed to have social media e.g. facebook, twitter etc, and if I didn't have to go to so many meetings and fill in so many forms'

(13 year old, female, foster care, Rotherham)

'Being able to go out with friends'

(17 year old, female, Foster Care, OOA)

'To be able to talk to friends and family more'

(16 year old, male, Foster Care, Doncaster)

'To have mobile phones just like other young people'

(14 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Having parents who love me and help me through tough times be there when I need them. Someone to care and love me. Someone to keep me safe'

(12 year old, female, Foster Care, Doncaster)

'Have my Mum & Dad back'

(11 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'To live as long as I want with my foster family and not wait till I am 18 and no good for the money & they don't want me anymore'

(18 year old, female, OOA)

'Less rules and regulations'

(12 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'For schools to stop treating me different in school, like if I want to go out at lunch I can't pick my friends for myself – teachers wait at side door specially for me to tell me who I can go with. They think they are looking out for me because I am in care but they are treating me different and it's not fair' (15 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Ensure all teachers keep information about us private. Once, not on purpose I heard a teacher talking about another student who was in a placement. I shouldn't have heard this' (12 year old, female, Foster Care, Rotherham)

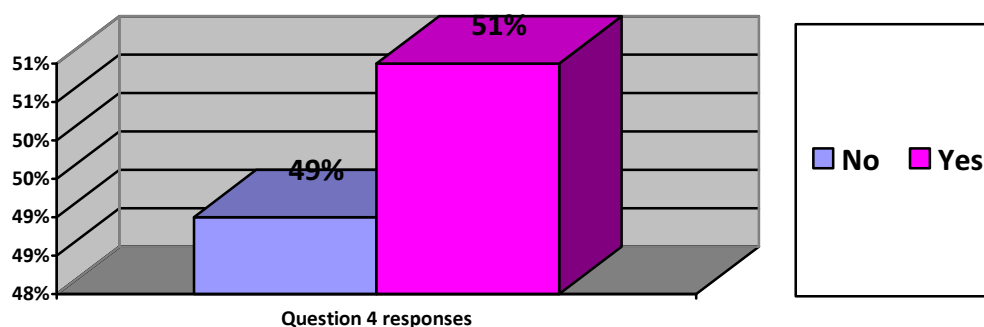
'By going out without staff all the time' (16 year old, male, Residential, Wrexham)

'Being able to go were ever I want meet people when ever I want'
(11 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Have some freedom & go places on my own (like other young people who aren't in care'
(16 year old, female, Foster Care, Sheffield)

'Not to feel watched' (20 year old, male, Independent, Rotherham)

Q4. *Is there anything else you would like to tell us about being in care or leaving care?*



This question was included by the LAC Council to capture anything that the young person may wish to voice whilst they have the opportunity.

'51% - Had more to tell us!'

During thematic analysis of these 51% of participants comments, the LAC Council placed them into 6 categories below:-

Professionals/Support

'Everything is okay, Syed helps me a lot' (11 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'Yes, I really like care. It's really good. I like the staff they really help us. They give us what we want and really help' (14 year old, male, Foster Care, Rotherham)

'put the right workers with the right child!' (20 year old female, independent, Rotherham)

'Care helps on so many levels it helps to plan and because you have support by staff and there willing to Put time and effort into stuff with you'
(16 year old, male, residential, Retford)

'I like living at park house and I like working with all staff I also enjoy activities with staff'
(12 year old, male, residential, Notts)

'What people say that things are going to get done never get done'
(16 year old, female, foster Care, Rotherham)

'It's okay, I get extra help with school and treated like a normal 13 year old girl – at home and at school. I enjoy where I live and I like school in general but there's some idiots who pick on me sometimes but other than that it's okay'
(13 year old, female, foster care, Rotherham)

'I like all the staff here and enjoy them spending time with me taking me out'
(13 year old, male, St Bedes)

'Lisa is amazing, Lisa should get an award, she really does, unsung hero award or something like that! Hope this brightened your day lol'
(18 year old, male, foster care, Doncaster)

Belonging/Family

'Being in care is not that bad. You get a loving family that appericate and love you an everything you have ever wanted' (13 year old, female, foster care, Doncaster)

'I'm happy in care but would like more contact in Rotherham'
(12 year old, male, foster care, Rotherham)

'being in care is hard. I miss my family and want to be home with my family'
(17 year old, female, foster care, OOA)

'It's a really better place for me and I get better chances to go on holiday and I see my family'
(12 year old, male, foster care, Rotherham)

'It is difficult in care because I am a single mum. I don't see all my family I am unhappy because I am not treated as an adult hear in this country like in my own'
(16 year old, female, foster care, Sheffield)

Safe/Security

'Them who are going into care no need to panic because you will be safe and it wil be like a home what you will be safe an have a great life in ☺ !!'

(13 year old, female, foster care, Rotherham)

'It has made a big difference in my life a good difference'

(17 year old, female, foster care, Bradford)

'It's for your own good realy so there's nothing you can do about it but here's my moto for it - Live life like you want no one can get in the way'

(13 year old, female, foster care, Doncaster)

'There's a sign in the care home saying that there is no need to worry. I know there is no danger and I am always safe'

(14 year old, male, semi-independent, Rotherham)

'Well I'm pleased that I live in care cause I've got a much better and safer home'

(10 year old, female, foster care, Doncaster)

'Being in care is scary I wish I was at home where I belong with my family and friends ther no internet her too so I can't play on my Xbox ☹'

(13 year old, male, Chesterfield)

Miscellaneous Comments

'It's good until you turn 18'

(18 year old, female, Nelson Street)

'£1,700 savings wasn't enough and more things should be funded'

(17 year old, female, foster care, Rotherham)

'Would like to be able to relax more at weekends than living strickt routine'

(12 year old, male, foster care, Rotherham)

'It's a good thing to do'

(16 year old, male, Wales)

'It's fun and no body judges you for it because they don't know what it is like'

(13 year old, male, foster care, Rotherham)

'It is different and helps you for your own future – P.S. Sorry about my writing'

(17 year old, male, Notts)

'I REALLY, REALLY ENJOY BEING IN CARE! HOWEVER WEIRED THAT SOUNDS, I DON'T REALLY GRIEVE ABOUT MY PARENTS THAT MUCH'

(12 year old, female, foster care, Doncaster)

Recommendations from Rotherham Looked After and Leaving Care Young People

Recommendations 1 & 2)

LAC Equity supports trusting relationships = Greater Protection

36% of LAC who participated in this feedback felt they were not always treated the same as their non-looked after peers. It is felt that trust may be compromised between young people in care and their carers, social workers, teachers and other professionals when looked after young people perceive they are not being treated the same or equal to other young people. As widespread research suggests that trust is crucial to develop strong stable relationships, and these types of relationships help protect children in care, the Rotherham Looked After Children's Council suggest that trust needs to be strengthened, recommending that 'equity' awareness training should be made available for all staff working with LAC to challenge some pre-conceived ideas around the needs of LAC. In addition, it is suggested that LA&LC young people need more voice & influence opportunities to identify and share with their corporate parents what is really important to them individually to genuinely influence their own care. Together, these two suggestions may potentially help build stronger, trusting and stable relationships with looked after young people and their workers and in turn help protect LAC in Rotherham.

Recommendation 3)

Greater social interaction with Voice & Influence youth groups

30% of LAC feel they don't have same value as their peers undermining their self-confidence and self-esteem. During discussion the LAC Council talked about how isolating being in care can be without their biological families and often having few positive relationships with peers outside of the LAC Council. It is felt that looked after young people should have greater Voice and Influence opportunities to engage in social interaction youth groups with other looked after children, actively participating in educational, sporting and team building opportunities will build upon personal development. Research shows that such group work methods raise self-esteem and confidence, increases quality of life and wellbeing in vulnerable young people. In addition positive engagement with social groups promotes the cultivation of social capital which in turn contributes to young people's resilience. The LAC Council suggests that Social Workers, PA's, Managers and Foster Carer's actively promote the engagement of looked after and leaving care young people in Voice & Influence youth groups across Rotherham.

Recommendation 4)

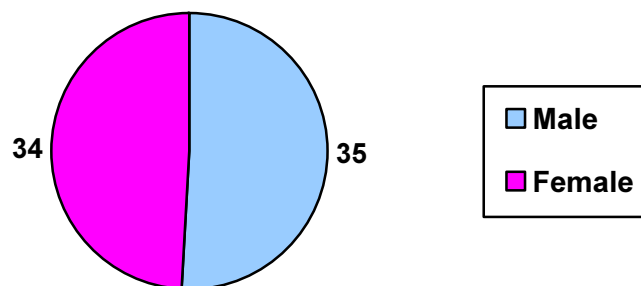
LAC Voices empowered to negotiate their contact with family

Another issue raised by LA&LC young people scattered across all four questions emphasised a common complaint that they weren't allowed to see their 'real' parents and siblings as often as they would like to. Although, it is understood that these are most often due to legal conditions to protect LA&LC young people, it is recommended that whenever possible and safe, looked after children and young people should be given a greater voice to express their wishes and empowered to negotiate the frequency of contact with siblings, and in turn furnished with opportunities to make contact with their parent/s and/or siblings. Where this choice is not possible, further explanations and emotional support should be forthcoming from Foster Carers, Social Workers and Reviewing Officers etc.

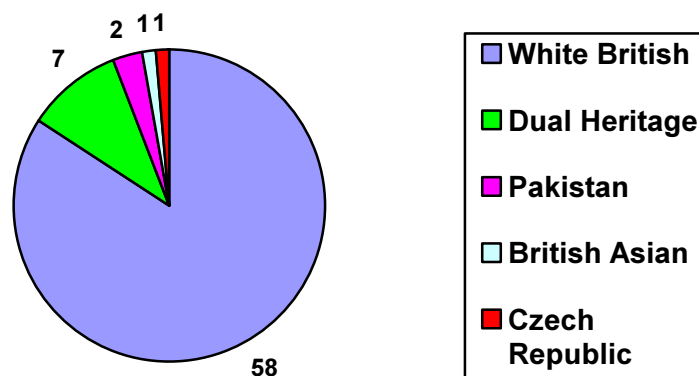
Descriptive Data ~ Looked After & Leaving Care Feedback

The descriptive data for all 69 young people engaged through Voice & Influence with Looked After Children and those in Leaving Care. Showing Gender, Ethnicity, Living Arrangements, and Age from the Young Person's feedback processes has been expressed below in various charts.

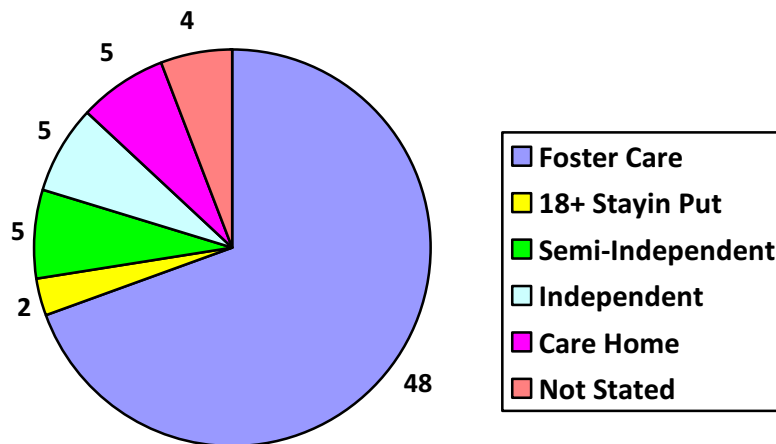
Gender of 69 Young People



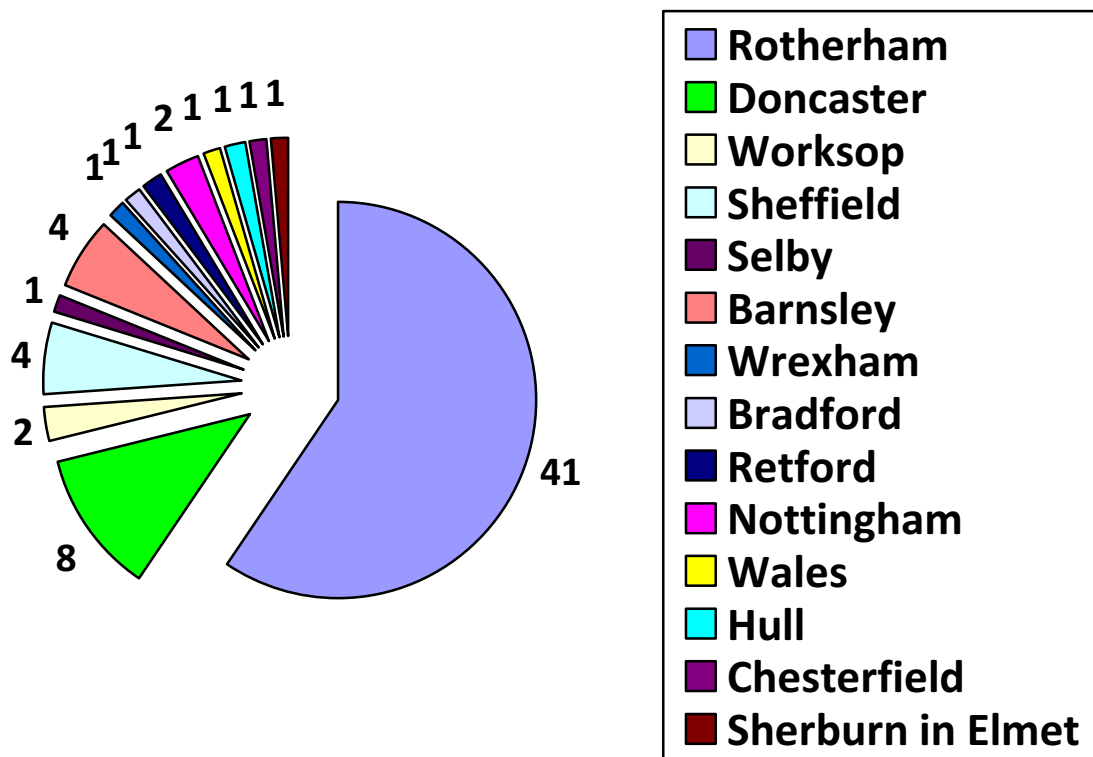
Ethnic Origins of 69 Young People



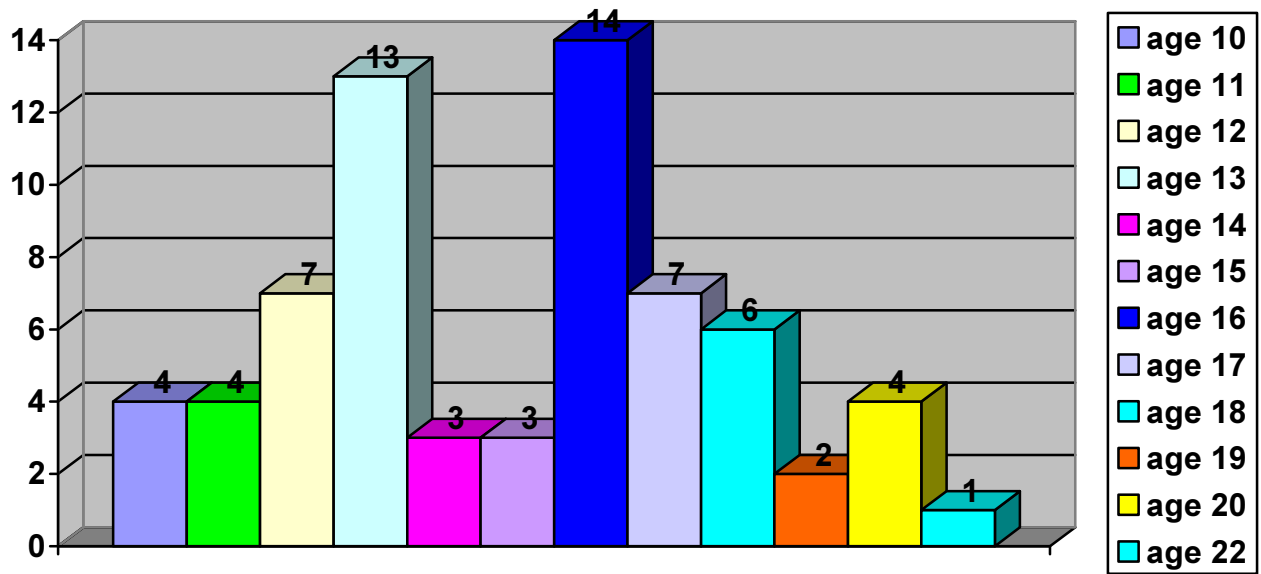
Breakdown of 69 Young People Living Arrangements:-



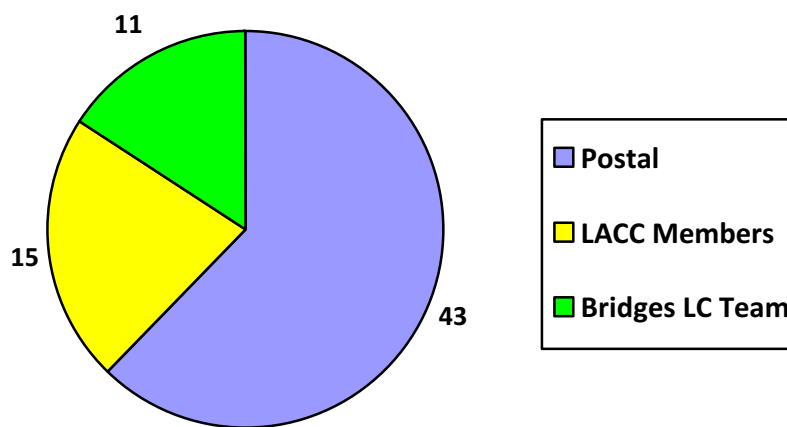
69 Young People living in and outside of Rotherham:



Ages of 69 Participants



Route of Completed feedback



If you are a looked after child aged 11–21 years, please complete this form and give us your feedback. Your voice is very important to us! The LAC Council will review this information in confidence alongside other 'Have Your Say' forms from other young people in care.



Have Your Say

Please hand/post this completed form back to:
Lisa Du-Valle at the LAC Council or
 Eric Manns Building
 Opposite Town Hall
 Moorgate, Rotherham

Tel: 01709 822130 or Mob: 07748143388
 Or hand in to your social worker to give to Lisa.



LACC Rotherham
 Feedback report 2015/Du-Valle



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Council

By filling in this form you will be in with a chance of winning gift cards to be spent at



Prize Draw! **£60 Gift Card**
£25 Gift Card
£15 Gift Card

Have your say...

Name:	Age
Address:	
Ethnicity:	

Q1. Do you feel that you are treated the same as other young people around you who aren't in care? (Please circle)

Yes **No** **Sometimes** **Not Sure**

Please explain why you feel like this:

Q3. What would make young people who feel differently feel the same as young people who aren't in care or leaving care?

Q2. Are there any times where you feel less valued than young people who aren't in care? For example, places you go or people you are around?

Q4. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about being in care?

