

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 17 DECEMBER 2019

Title of paper:	Have Your Say Survey 2018-19	
Director:	Helen Blackman – Director, Children’s Integrated Services	Wards affected: All
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Relevant Council Plan Key Theme:		
Nottingham People		<input type="checkbox"/>
Living in Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Growing Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Respect for Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Serving Nottingham Better		<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):		
Report on the findings of the Have Your Say survey 2018-19 including areas highlighted for further inquiry through the Children in Care Council; and details of the change in the way the survey is carried out, with recommendations for future iterations.		
Recommendations:		
1	<p>That the Board notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the findings of the Have Your Say survey and supports its use in informing decision making by the Board and its partners; • and commends the participation of respondents in the survey and, in particular, the members of the Children in Care Council who helped with the assessment of survey results; • that the Board will work with the Children in Care Council to explore further the areas highlighted for further inquiry and co-creation; 	
2	That the Board approves the move to a cost-neutral model of survey distribution, and supports efforts to improve take-up in survey response by encouraging greater participation across workforce, carers and care agencies and other relevant partners.	

1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 The Have Your Say survey for Children in Care and Care Leavers provides an important platform for engagement with our corporately parented children and young people. The survey questions are based on the pledges in the Children in Care and Care Leavers’ Charter, and therefore give the Corporate Parenting Board feedback on user satisfaction against those pledges.

1.2 The survey is not a statutory requirement but it is regarded as one of the key ways in which the voice of the child is heard above and beyond statutory processes such as the Looked After Child reviews. As such it forms part of our evidence of participation for inspection and peer review processes.

2 BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

2.1 The survey consists of a series of questions, in a mixture of tick box (quantitative) and open text (qualitative) answers. The feedback, whether quantitative or qualitative, is the respondent's own subjective opinion: all answers given are perceptual rather than empirical. Accordingly, where figures and/or percentages indicate dissatisfaction with a service or process, they should not be regarded as a reliable analysis of service performance. Rather they indicate areas where children and young people have perceived that things are not as good as they could be for them, or have not personally had a satisfying experience. This provides a useful steer for the Board to engage further with its corporately parented children and young people, to discover what needs to be improved and co-create solutions to challenges.

2.2 With regard to the process of distributing, collecting, collating and analysing the survey, this year we departed from the established process of mailing out individual surveys and instead initiated a new process where surveys were handed out to respondents via social care workers. This change was driven by two factors: firstly the need to find a way of achieving a cost-neutral process; and secondly, the objective of involving social care workers more closely in the survey, by giving them a key role in handing out and collecting the survey from those they work with.

2.3 Survey Purpose and Structure

The questionnaire is based upon the Nottingham City Children in Care & Care Leavers' Charter in order to establish how children in care and care leavers perceive their 'Corporate Parent' is delivering against the charter priorities. This year, analysis of survey responses has been produced under four headings to reflect the focus of the charter.

- **Respect For You**
- **Your Development**
- **Your Voice**
- **Your Future**

2.3.1 Survey Distribution

In 2018-2019, the arrangements for distributing, completing and collecting the Children in Care and Care Leavers survey changed from a paper and postal format to an electronic format. The questionnaire was created as an online 'SNAP' survey, with the option of a printed version if required. The link to the questionnaire was distributed by email to social workers, independent review officers, carers and residential home managers. Replacing the previous postal survey with the new distribution method has saved approximately £1,000 by eliminating the costs associated with professional printing, postage and pre-paid return envelopes

A number of other Local Authorities use an electronic survey; with some councils contracting a third sector company to assist with the survey planning and analysis. To minimise costs, we design, administer and analyse the survey in-house.

2.3.2 Survey Response Rate

The survey was available for distribution to all 620 Children in Care (CiC). In addition, Care Leavers (CL), were offered the opportunity to complete the survey when they visited the Leaving Care Team. The survey ran from 1st June to 13th September 2019

- In total, 86 completed responses were returned to the Children's Integrated Services team (20 completed online, 66 via printed copy).

This is a response rate of 13.9%; a decrease from the previous year when the response rate was 18.5%. This reduction is likely to be a direct result of the change in distribution method. It is expected that participation in the survey will increase significantly next year. Publically available results for the other local authorities using electronic distribution¹, suggest that the return rate increases significantly from the second year of running the survey electronically. Return rates between 21%-44% and an overall average return rate of 35% have been achieved by other authorities¹.

The content of all forms returned was checked for safe-guarding purposes by the Children's Social Care team.

2.3.3 Response Rate and Demographic Breakdown

- Questionnaires were distributed to the social workers, independent review officers or residential home managers of 620 Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers (CL). The questionnaire was also made available to Care Leavers who visited the Leaving Care Team during the survey period
- An easy read version was offered to children aged 3-7 and the full version to Children in Care ages 8+ and Care Leavers. In total, 86 completed surveys were received, achieving a 14% response rate, compared with the previous year's response rate of 19%. Almost 80% of respondents to the survey were aged over 12 years and only 10% of respondents were aged under 11 years (the remaining 10% of responses were on behalf of a child in care or care leaver (age not specified) or the age category question was left blank. This is a similar age profile to 2017.

Age Categories	Responses	% of All Responses
A child in care (11 or under)	9	10%
A child in care (aged 12 - 18)	39	45%
A care leaver (aged 18 and over)	29	34%
On behalf of a child in care or a care leaver	8	9%
(blank)	2	2%
Total	86	100%

- This year a greater number of responses than usual were returned anonymously. In addition, only 24% of respondents opted to specify their year of age and 35% specified gender. It is therefore not possible to establish whether the responses received are representative of the full cohort of children in care and care leavers in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. In previous years, demographic data has been made available by using a reference number to analyse the response rate by demographic attributes for equality purposes. The

reference number was not issued with the survey this year but will be considered again next year.

2.3.4 Changes to Analysis and Reporting

In 2018-19 there were no changes made to the survey questions used in the previous year. In previous reports, a traffic light system (Red, Amber and Green) has been used to mark each commitment and identify things that work well, things that need to improve and areas where significant problems have been raised. The RAG ratings were based on initial data analysis and confirmed after discussion with members of the CIC & CL council.

This year, we have made more use of the rich qualitative data captured by the survey. Every qualitative comment made on the survey was checked for relevancy to the question asked, then categorised as 'broadly positive', 'broadly negative' or neutral. By nature, qualitative data can be sensitive so any names mentioned were removed, as was any other content likely to identify the individual.

The comments were reviewed with the CIC and CL members who discussed whether the issues raised were likely to be experienced by significant numbers of other young people in care. The responses have been grouped into four areas:

A. Respect for You

Respect and Time (from social workers, personal advisors and carers)

B. Your Development

Placement, Healthy Living, Education, Change, Family and Friendships

C. Your Voice

Support with Problems, Planning and Communication

D. Your Future

Skills, Preparing to Leave Care

This means that analysis of question responses may not follow in question number order in the report, although question numbers have been retained to aid cross-referencing with material contained in the Appendix.

2.3.5 Summary of findings

A. Respect for you

Respect:

The majority of respondents to this question (91%) feel they are respected by their social worker or personal advisor 'All' or '*Most of the Time*' this is similar to the response in 2017). Similarly, 94% of respondents feel they are respected by their carer '*All*' or '*Most of the Time*'. This is a small reduction from 2017.

Time:

83% of respondents feel their social worker or personal advisor has enough time for them. This shows an increase in relation to the 2017 survey and has risen by 12 percentage points over the last two years.

The proportion of children and young people responding to the survey who feel their carer(s) have enough time for them 'All' or 'Most of the Time' has fallen slightly to 92% (from 96% in 2017).

Be Happy:

Overall, 75% of respondents are 'Very Happy' or 'Happy' with the way Nottingham City Council takes care of them. This is a slight decrease in comparison with 2017, but an overall drop of 7 percentage points since 2016.

CIC & CL Council View: It is important for social workers to be available and value their relationship with the young person. Plans should be agreed, tasks done on time and promises kept. Carers need to be consistently available. Confidentiality is important.

B. Your Development

Your Placement:

Most respondents to this question in 2019 feel their placement is right for them (77%). However, satisfaction with placement has decreased since 2017 (83%) and is more similar to satisfaction levels in 2016. Comments made in the survey showed a variety of reasons why a young person might not be happy in placement; sometimes to do with missing family rather than the placement itself. Distance from support was also mentioned.

Feeling Safe:

93% of survey respondents answered these questions. Of those responding; 93% felt safest at home and 94% of people said they felt safe at school/FE College/Work (both similar to previous years). Just 87% of respondents felt safe in their neighbourhood (a decline from the previous year and a similar level to 2016). Comments made in the survey about feeling safer included; knowing how to cope with people who seem threatening or unfamiliar and feeling unsafe in a care home when new people arrived and 'lashed out'. Feeling unsafe on journeys home in winter after school was mentioned at the CIC & CL council.

CIC & CL Council View: Feeling unsafe on journeys home in winter after school can be a problem for CiC.

Worry:

19% of the people who answered this question felt worried 'All' or 'Most of the Time' which was broadly similar to 2017 (16%). The most common worries specified were family or anxiety related. Worries caused by a lack of documentation or asylum claims and bills/benefits/childcare were also mentioned, perhaps representing a greater proportion of older respondents and care leavers in this year's survey. Coping mechanisms included music, sport talking to friends, relaxation techniques or avoiding conflict

Health and Free Time:

Almost 93 % of respondents to this question said they felt healthy 'All of the Time' or 'Often'; a similar level to 2017. Only 55% of survey respondents told us how they found out about staying healthy. This response was free text and some sources were grouped together for analysis. The most common source of knowledge (mentioned by 27%) was through 'School, Life-Skills Training or Carers', followed by 'Health Care Professionals' (19%). 'Online/TV/Magazines' and 'Friends and Family' were mentioned by 10% or less of the group.

72% of survey respondents told us how they spend their free time. The most popular choices were Physical Activity (45% of respondents); spending time with Friends or Family (35%) and Screen Based Activities (34%). Activities some people wanted to take up included gymnastics, acting, kick-boxing, ice-skating and gardening. Anxiety was mentioned as a potential block to participation; as was withdrawal of funding which stopped a young person participating in a higher level sports team.

Education:

The proportion of respondents who felt they were doing *'Well 'or 'Very Well'* in Education in 2019 fell significantly this year, after good progress in 2017. However the proportion of respondents who said they did *'not attend School /FE/Work'* has also risen, possibly indicating a higher proportion of care leavers among the survey respondents this year.

70% of 2019 survey respondents told us about their PEP. A significantly greater proportion *'Knew about their PEP'* and/or were *'Involved with their PEP'* than in 2017 and broadly the same proportion were *'Happy with their PEP'* as in 2017.

This year there has been a small increase in the proportion of respondents who feel they *'Would do better with more help'*, but still a decrease overall compared to 2016. 24% of survey respondents went on to tell us more about their PEP; 11 comments were positive about PEP and 8 comments had a negative focus.

Change:

The proportion of responses indicating a change of Social Worker (46%) or School (18%) has fallen significantly in comparison to 2017; when they were 57% and 37% respectively.

Changes to Home have risen slightly (47%, from 40% in 2017). Changes for Carer (27%) and those reporting *'no change'* (19%) are very similar to last year. Some young people will experience more than one of these changes.

24% of survey respondents commented on what helped them cope with change, 12 comments made were positive and 7 negative. 76% of respondents reported that the help they had been offered to cope with change was *'Very Good' or 'Good'*. This is a small improvement from 2017 and from 70% in 2016.

CIC & CL Council View:

Continuity of relationships and the chance for early input to any potential changes were valued.

Family and Friendships:

The question about seeing your own family had one of the highest response rates in the survey (95% of respondents).

The proportion of CIC and CL seeing their families either *'As Much as I Like'* or *'Quite Often'* is similar to 2017. Twenty five respondents added comments about getting in touch with their birth family; including comments about *'not wanting contact at the moment'* or the social worker trying to maintain contact but the birth parent *'not trying'*. This highlights the complexity of the issue.

98% of respondents answered questions about keeping in touch with friends. The majority of respondents still do not 'See or speak to old friends' or 'Go to old friend's houses to visit', but the proportion of those that do (42% and 21% respectively), has risen slightly since 2017.

The greatest change was a drop in the percentage of respondents who have made new friends since leaving care; from 68% in 2017 to 35% in 2019.

CIC & CL Council View: The CIC & CL Council acknowledged that keeping in touch was difficult; social media was mentioned but not the same as physically seeing a friend. One council member said they 'didn't really have friends before coming into care but that they have since made friends through school'.

C. Your Voice

Raising Problems:

After improvement in 2017, the percentage of CIC & CL who 'Know where to go with a problem or complaint' has been maintained at 92% and the proportion of young people who know someone else to speak to other than their social worker or personal advisor is similar to last year.

The proportion who feel their opinions are 'Heard and Make a Difference' ('All' or 'Most of the Time') has remained steady for the last three surveys.

Keeping in Contact:

Approximately half of the survey respondents said they would like to receive information about how well Nottingham City Council is looking after children and young people in care.

Text was the most popular option selected for keeping in touch (37%; up from 25% in 2017), followed by Telephone (32%; up from 17% in 2017). The popularity of Newsletter as a communication method has dropped from 58% in 2017 to 32%. Facebook and Website were the least popular methods for hearing from us.

Getting Involved:

15% of respondents (13 young people), said they were interested in getting involved in the Children in Care Council and having a say about care issues.

D. Your Future

Planning Your Future:

93% of respondents (80 people) told us how they were supported in planning for their future. Most were 'Happy or Very Happy' but the small percentage of respondents who were 'Unhappy or Very Unhappy' has almost doubled since 2017. Only those who were 'Unhappy or Very Unhappy' added free text to this section of the survey. One young person commented that they were worried because they were nearly 18 and anticipated being 'thrown out'. Another felt only their mum helped them and another that the 'city council didn't help but the care home did'.

CIC & CL Council View: CIC & CL Council gave a more varied response on this topic. They discussed better experiences with planning for the future and used the issue of 'happiness' as a springboard for some of the suggestions contained in the summary.

Life Skills:

99% of respondents answered one or more questions in this group. The proportion of people who *'would like help'* with any skill has decreased since 2017 and general appreciation for life skills training came through in the survey comments.

More than 75% of respondents said they could either clean, iron, wash clothes, iron clothes, cook for themselves or budget their money, leaving approximately 25% who needed help with one or more household skill.

Approximately 50% of respondents said they *'would like help'* with CV, interview or job skills and 42% *'would like help'* with being a responsible tenant.

CIC & CL Council View: The CIC and CL Council added that help in building household skills into a routine would be useful and that more assistance is needed to apply for jobs.

Pathway Plan:

Only care leavers or young people over the age of 15 were invited to respond to questions on the Pathway Plan.

In 2017, a slightly greater percentage of respondents (43%), knew what was in their Pathway Plan than in 2019. However, the percentage of question respondents who said they did not know they had a pathway plan rose from 17% in 2017 to 26% in 2019.

Comments made about the Pathway Plan were mainly positive; *'because it's like a guide to me moving on in life'*. One person commented *'I wasn't told Pathway Plan is for me. I thought it's for professionals, it isn't very young person friendly, layout needs changing.'*

2.3.6 Children in Care Council recommendations

Following their assessment of the 2018-19 Have Your Say survey, the Children in Care Council have identified three areas that they want to focus on in their forthcoming Corporate Children in Care Council meetings and co-creation work with the Corporate Parenting Board:

- a) Changing the culture of care, so that it provides more familial and loving living environments, language and all-round support for children and young people in care. Spreading the responsibility for being corporate parents to more agencies and partners, so that everyone plays their part in helping our CiC and Care Leavers do well in life.
- b) Improving opportunities for CiC and Care Leavers to prepare for independent living and successful adulthood, through greater support and access to services that help improve their life skills, academic attainment and experiences of work; and develop their social confidence, positive friendships and supportive networks.
- c) Older CiC and Care Leavers supporting the Have Your Say survey as peer interviewers to encourage more CiC and CL to share their views, experiences and ideas for change. More opportunities for care experienced young people to be involved in training of social workers and foster carers, and participate in recruitment processes for Children's Social Care staff.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Value for money and creating a sustainable, cost-neutral model for the survey.

4 FINANCE COLLEAGUE COMMENTS

4.1 None.

5 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COLLEAGUE COMMENTS

5.1 None

6 STRATEGIC ASSETS & PROPERTY COLLEAGUE COMMENTS

6.1 None

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An EIA is not required because the Have Your Say survey is available to all Children in Care over the age of three and tracked Care Leavers equitably, and improvement actions carried out as a result of the survey findings are done on behalf of the whole cohort.

8 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

8.1 None

9 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

9.1 Children in Care & Care Leavers Charter, CiC & CL Have Your Say survey