



# U MATTER SURVEY 2017

CONSULTATION FINDINGS FROM CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS



# INTRODUCTION

The U Matter Survey is a chance for children and young people in care to feedback to the City of York Council about their experiences of being in care. The importance of understanding the views of children and young people in care is addressed in Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. This states that *“when adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.”* This survey helps to ensure this is the case as it gives children and young people an opportunity to voice their opinion on what the local authority should change and improve for children and young people in care, as well as highlighting areas of strength.

This report will outline the findings from the 2017 U Matter Survey and, where possible, will discuss them in relation to the findings from the previous report in 2015. This will hopefully provide a comprehensive overview of the views of children and young people in care, as well as care leavers, and will aid in helping to improve and shape service provision.

## Method

The Survey was made available both online and as a paper copy. The online version could be accessed on Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com). When approaching children and young people about completing the survey, multiple strategies were adopted. A variety of professionals were asked to encourage young people they were working with to complete the survey (social workers, pathway workers, independent visitors and advocates), existing groups such as Show Me That I Matter, I Still Matter, I Matter Too and Altogether Active were approached, and foster carers / families were contacted to advise on the best way to engage individuals and, where necessary, visits were offered to support young people to complete the survey.

Young people participating were not required to include any personal information, however they were able to leave their name and contact details if they wanted further information about their rights and entitlements or to be entered into a prize draw with a chance to win £25 in vouchers.

## RESULTS

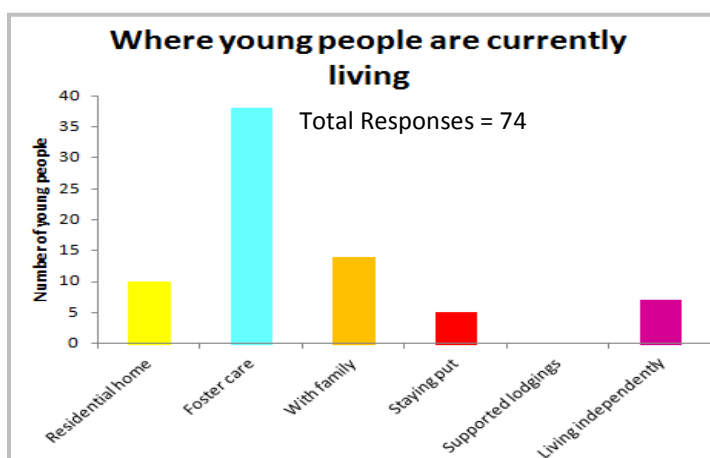
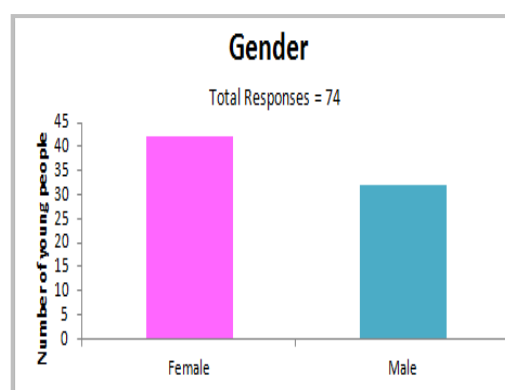
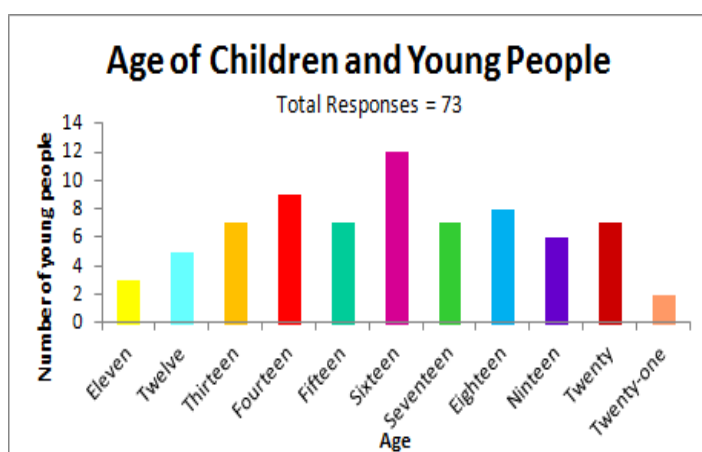
The results will be discussed in the order in which the sections were completed on the survey. Not all the questions were answered by all of the young people who took part in the survey and therefore there are varying levels of response rates to different questions.

### *Participation*

A total of 77 children and young people aged 11-21 took part in this survey, 84% of whom were still in care and 16% were care leavers. While this is a substantial number and enables us to gain some valuable insight into the views of young people in care, it is important to note that this report cannot claim to provide a review of the opinions of all children young people in the care of the City of York Council.

### *Age, Gender and Living Situation*

The following charts show the age and gender of young people who took part in the survey as well as where they were+ currently living.



These graphs show that the gender and ages of the young people who participated are fairly evenly distributed, meaning the results that are reported below are reflective of the views of both males and females, throughout a range of ages. The largest proportion of young people were currently in foster care (51%) and therefore these results will largely show the views of those who are in this current living situation.

## ***Section 1: Where You Live***

This survey asked whether young people were given any written information or photos of their foster home or residential setting before moving. 39% answered that they had and 61% answered that they had not. This is an improvement from 2015 when only 21% said they had received written information or photos before moving. It should however be noted that in some cases the reason given for no information being received was due to the placement being with a family member, however the fact that fewer than 50% reported receiving this information is of significance.

On being included in activities where they live, 72% said that they were, 12% said they were not and 15% said that they sometimes were.

Responses were extremely positive when children and young people were asked about their current placement with 94% said they were happy with their placement, while only 6% said they were not. When asked if they were able to speak to social worker if they were unhappy with their placement, 91% said that they were and 9% said they were not. This is an improvement from 2015 where only 72% said they would be able to talk to a social worker in this situation.

While only a relatively small number of young people were residing in residential placements (10 in total), one young person highlighted his varied experiences living in different residential settings:

“Due to my behaviour I got moved..., I realise now it was harder for placements for me to be found. I realise that care homes [can be] totally different, [some] were more caring than others, they wanted to help you change whilst [some] just wanted to criminalise you... I used to get sanctions with my money and that affected me more than being arrested. If you can get a young person to have focus then they'll stay out of trouble. My focus was music, my key worker in the care home got in touch with Princes Trust and got me a grant for some music equipment and helped me build a passion. Little things like the research my key worker did helped me a lot.” Young person, aged 19

## **Section2: Your Social Worker**

The number of young people who reported they knew how to contact their social worker if they needed them remained high this year at 85%, which is in line with last years findings, and a huge improvement can be seen in regards to young people knowing who to contact if their social worker is not available. This year 70% reported they would know who to contact whereas in 2015 only 45% reported this.

There were mixed responses regarding young people's views on the reliability of their social worker with 56% reporting them to be reliable, 20% saying they did not think they were reliable and 23% stating they were sometimes. It should be noted that this is a decrease in

positive responses from the 2015 survey, when 65% said they thought their social worker was reliable, however this could be attributed to the added option of 'sometimes' to the 2017 version of the survey.

In terms of how often they saw their social worker, 75% said that they were happy with how often they did while 14% said they were not and 11% said they weren't sure. When asked if they wanted to elaborate, most said that they would like to see them at least once a month. One young person aged 16 commented, "I would like to see my social worker every 4-5 weeks so I can bring any concerns up from your point of view".

Finally, the survey explored whether, if they had experienced a change of social worker, were they happy with the way in which this change over had taken place, to which a mixed response was reported with 58% saying they were and 42% saying they were not. One young person said "Too many social workers...I want just one social worker who I can bond with." It is worth noting that this survey was rolled out following a period of significant change and restructure in Children's Social Care and the findings are reflective of this.

### **Section 3: Reviews**

The survey revealed that 63% of young people knew who their Independent Reviewing Officer was, 16% said they didn't and 21% weren't sure. This is a decrease from 2015 when 78% said they knew who it was. However, again, this may be a result of the added third option of 'not sure' in this year's survey, giving children and young people the opportunity to select this where they might have opted for 'yes' in the 2015 survey. Additionally, there have also been recent changes within the IRO team which could also account for these results.

Young people were asked if they attended their review meetings and 85% said they did with 15% saying they didn't. This is an improvement from 2015 where only 65% said they usually attended the meetings. A very positive result is that 85% said they had the opportunity to speak to their IRO before their meetings and 15% said they didn't. Also, 51% said they were involved in planning their reviews, 26% said they weren't and 23% said they sometimes were. One young person aged 14 suggested that review meeting would be improved by "including me more, talking to me not each other". Another young person aged 19 reflected back on his reviews by saying "review meeting where extremely stressful for me when I was younger. I found that everyone was very supportive during these meetings and that's something I appreciate."

### **Section 4: Seeing Your Family and Friends**

The survey asked if young people felt they had received the help and support they needed to keep in touch with their family and friends; 87% responded that they had and 13%

hadn't. This is an increase from last year when only 82% felt that they had received this help and support.

This survey further asked if young people knew who to speak to if they were unhappy with these arrangements and 93% that they did, with only 7% responding that they didn't. They were also asked whether the reason had been explained to them if they had been unable to see someone and 77% said it had while 23% said it hadn't. Despite the majority responding that they had, the number who responded that they hadn't (15) is not insignificant and should be taken into account. One young person said that they didn't think they had enough "support with contact with family and friends living out of area".

## **Section 5: Education and Training**

The number of young people who felt they were receiving the right amount of support in their education and training remains high at 89% (with only 11% feeling they hadn't) This is consistent with the 2015 results where, again, 89% felt they had received the right amount of support.

Results from this section also revealed that 90% knew who to go to at school if they needed support (10% did not) and that 80% stated that they were involved in their Personal Education Plan (PEP) (20% were not). It is worth noting that two young people commented that they did not know what their PEP was.

## **Section 6: Health and Happiness**

Regarding after school clubs and activities, 93% of children and young people felt that they were able to choose if they wanted to take part in the ones that they wanted, whereas only 7% (4 people) felt that they were not.

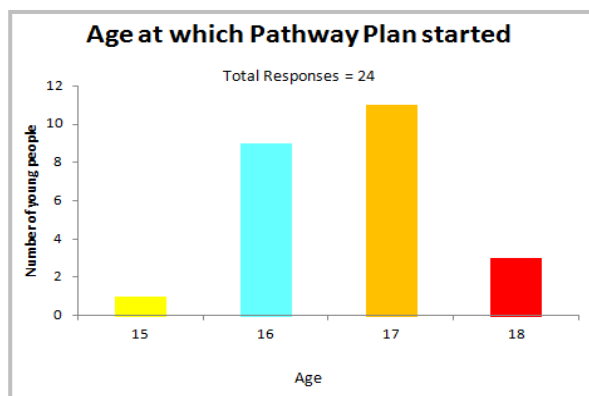
When asked about their Health Assessment, 85% said they knew what it was while 15% said that they did not.

The most positive response from this survey was in answer to the question "If you didn't feel happy is there someone you would be able to talk to?" where 97% of children and young people who answered said yes and only 3% said no. They were also asked if they knew where to get information, advice and support and 93% said that they did. One 14 year old young person commented, "I don't really tell anyone how I feel, but I know who to talk to if needed."

When invited to provide any additional information two young people commented on either lack of knowledge about how to access CAMHS provision or unhappiness with the CAMHS provision they had received.

## Section 7: Leaving Care

In 2015, 89% felt they had received enough support to prepare for leaving care and 86% felt they had since leaving care. This year positive responses remained high, but saw a slight drop with 81% reporting that they had received enough support when getting ready to leave care and 86% reporting they had received enough support since leaving care.



Care leavers were asked at what age they started their Pathway Plan and the graph shows these results. Care leavers were asked if they thought their Pathway Plan had helped prepare them for independent living to which 62% felt it had and 38% felt it hadn't. One care leaver stated that "Pathway have been really supportive" whereas another said that they had

"learned to live independently [on their own] and through [support from their] foster carers."

Young people responded extremely positively to questions about their happiness with contact with their Pathway Worker and support on managing finances. 91% said they were happy with the level of contact they had with their worker and 92% felt they had received enough support with managing their money. However when invited to provide further information the following two comments were made:

"I feel there could be more support for when I need someone to talk to." Young person age 20.

"I think young people should be taught more about ... understanding loans and reasons for avoiding them, credit score and banking when turning 18. These are really important things to teach people about money management." Young person age 19.

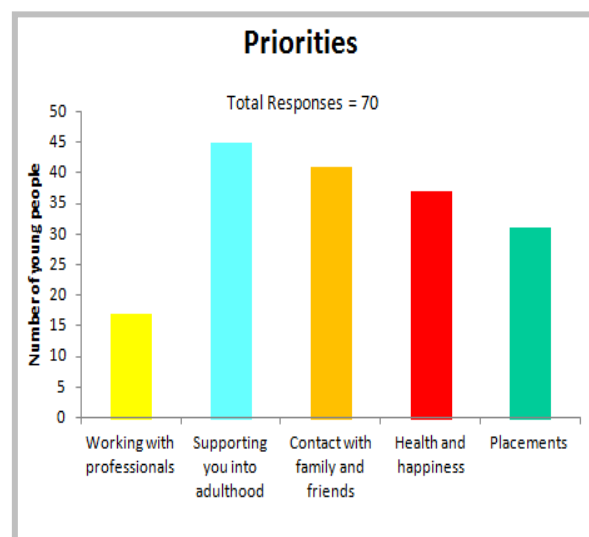
## Section 8: Rights and Entitlements

The majority of young people felt their workers and carers treated them with respect (97%), which has increased from 85% in 2015. Two young people responded "sometimes" to this question and one felt that "only carers treat [them] with respect." Young people were also asked if they felt they had a say in the decisions that had been made about them and 85% felt they had while 15% felt they hadn't, which is in line with results from 2015.

The survey revealed that 77% felt they knew enough about their rights and entitlements and 23% didn't. Furthermore, 83% knew about Speak Up and 17% did not (this is similar to the 2015 results which found 81% knew about the service). This year, 96% reported knowing

they could make a complaint if they were ever unhappy, which shows an improvement from last year when only 88% said they knew they had the right to make a complaint.

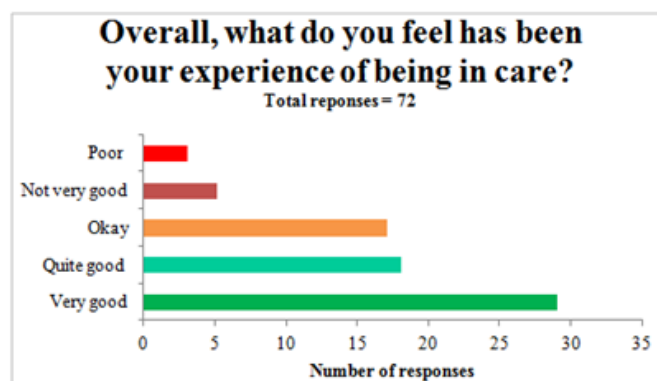
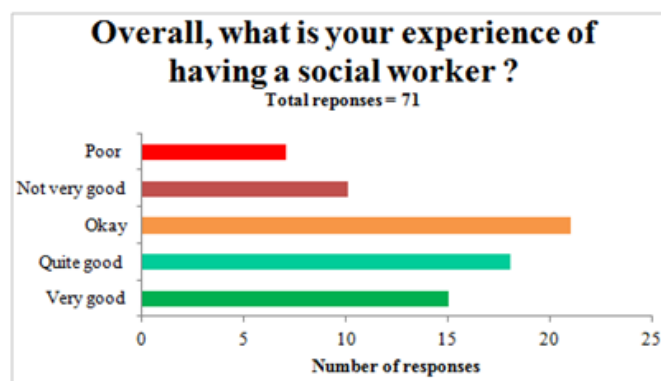
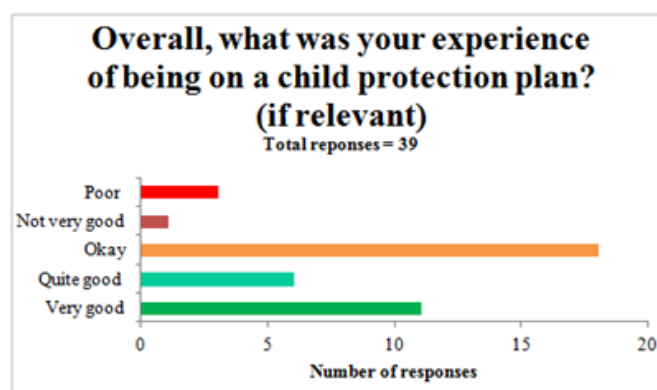
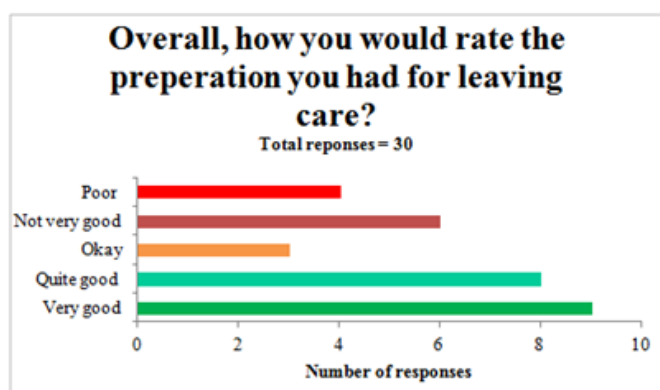
When asked, 75% said they knew about SMTIM and 25% said they did not. Following from this, 50% said they wanted to know more about getting involved in participation activities. However, some of the individuals who responded that they did not want to know more explained that this was because they were/had already been involved. The survey asked



about young people's view on what the priorities should be of the Children in Care Council, Show Me That I Matter. They were asked which of the following were the most important for SMTIM to work on: working with professionals, supporting into adulthood, contact with family and friends, health and happiness and placements. They were invited to select as many of the options as they wished and the chart displays the results, with supporting into adulthood and contact with family and friends receiving the most responses.

## Section 9: Overall Experience

The first part of the final section contained four questions asking about the overall experience the young people have had of being in care. There were five response options: Very Good, Quite Good, Okay, Not Very Good and Poor.





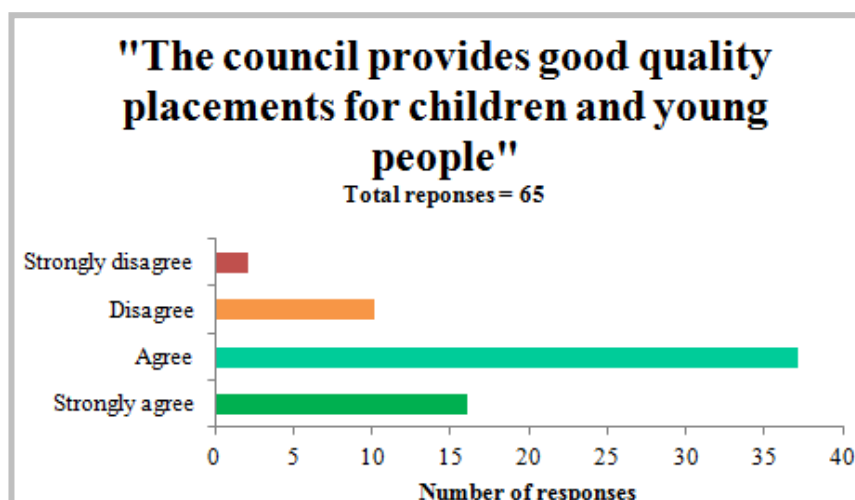
The data shows that a large proportion (65%) of young people stated that their experience of care was quite good or very good. Some young people (24%) simply said their experience was okay. 11% did not feel their experience had been good.

Almost half (46%) of the young people felt their experience of being on a child protection plan was only okay while 44% felt it was either good or very good, 8% felt it had been poor and 2% (one individual) felt it had not been very good. Less than half (46%) felt that their experience of having a social worker was either good or very good, 30% felt it was okay and 25% felt it was either not very good or poor.

Over half (57%) of young people felt the overall preparation they had for leaving care had been good or very good, 10% felt it was okay and 33% felt it was not very good or poor. When you compare this with the results from the previous leaving care section it is not clear why such a significant number felt their preparation had been poor / not very good when they had rated the support they had received so positively. It could be that this is more of a reflection on whether young people can ever feel fully prepared for the reality of independent living, rather than a reflection on specific support provided for those leaving care.

Finally, the survey asked how much children and young people agreed with the following statement in the last 12 months: "The council provides good quality placements for children and young people in care?"

They were given four response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The graph below displays the number of responses for each option and shows that the majority of children and young people either agree or strongly agree with the statement (82% either agreed or strongly agreed) while 18% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.



## SUMMARY

The final section of this report will summarise the findings from the survey and highlight key strengths as well as areas to focus on in order to improve the experiences of children and young people in the care of City of York Council. Areas of strength include the quality of placements for children and young people (with 82% of young people describing these as good quality placements), young people's views on how they are treated by professionals and whether they are included in decision making (with 97% reporting that they are treated with respect and 85% stating that they have a say in decisions that are made about them) and young people's awareness of their right to make a complaint if they are unhappy (96%).

The majority of young people who were asked stated that they were currently happy in their placement (94%) and would be able to speak to their social worker if they weren't (91%). However, less than half reported that they had received written information or photographs prior to moving to their placement. High numbers of young people reported knowing how to contact their social worker (85%) and an increasing number knew who to contact if their social worker was unavailable (an increase from 45% in 2015 to 70%). However a significant number of young people reported that they had been unhappy with how a change of social worker had been managed (42%). In terms of seeing their family and friends, the majority of young people felt that they had received a sufficient amount of support, knew who to contact about these arrangements and had felt that were they not able to see someone, the reasons had been explained to them.

A significant number of young people stated they didn't know who their current IRO was (37%) and only half reported that they were involved in the planning of their review meetings. However a high percentage of young people reported that they regularly attended their reviews and had the opportunity to speak to their IRO before the meetings.

The majority of young people felt they were receiving the right amount of support in their education and training (89%), knew who they could go to in school if they need any support (90%) and felt they were able to choose if they wanted to take part in after school clubs and activities (93%).

In relation to leaving care provision, responses were positive with the majority of care leavers reporting that they had received enough support both in preparation for leaving care (81%) and since they had left care (86%). However, in contrast, when asked about their overall experiences, 33% stated that they hadn't felt adequately prepared for leaving care. 38% didn't see the value in their Pathway Plan but the majority were happy with the contact they had with their Pathway Worker (91%) and felt they had received enough support in managing their money (92%).