

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK... AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO US

The results of our most recent survey with young people in care, what they mean to us, and how we'll act on them.

“MY CARER HAS DONE SO MUCH FOR ME AND CHANGED MY LIFE FROM BAD TO GOOD.” (11, MALE)

“MY TACT CARERS ARE THE ONLY FAMILY WHO HAVE EVER TREATED ME AS THEY WOULD THEIR OWN.”
(17, FEMALE)

“THEY ARE ABLE TO BOOST MY CONFIDENCE AND STOP ME SAYING SOMETHING BAD ABOUT MYSELF.”
(15, FEMALE)

“THEY’VE ALWAYS FOUGHT FOR ME TO GET MY CHOICES RIGHT.”
(16, FEMALE)

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SECTION 1 – SETTING THE SCENE

TACT

TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN

“EVERYTHING THEY DO MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A PART OF THE CARER’S FAMILY.”
(11, FEMALE)

We believe that care can and should be a positive, transformative experience for every young person. No matter what we do, our motivation is the same: building better lives for children and young people in care. TACT carers and staff work every day to ensure that children and young people are at the core of TACT’s work.

We’re not only a fostering and adoption agency: we’re also a campaigning charity. Because of our expertise in fostering and adoption services we are equipped to argue for changes to policy and legislation for young people in care across the UK. Our charity status means we re-invest any surplus we make back into services for carers and the children and young people we look after. Our reputation as a campaigning body means we’ve been able to speak up for vulnerable children and those stigmatised by being in care.

We cannot do all these things without listening to our young people and telling their stories.

For us, listening to the voices of the young people we work with isn’t just an add-on or done to tick an inspection checkbox; it is an ethos that influences the staff we choose to work with us, the way we recruit and support foster carers, and the opportunities we offer to young people in TACT care.

Sharing the results of our latest survey in this report brings to life how positively young people in TACT placements feel about the care they receive, their relationships with their foster carers, and their ambitions for the future. We believe that listening to and valuing young people’s views and ideas doesn’t just help us deliver better services and campaign more effectively; it also helps young people reach their potential.

We are proud to help young people in our care to find their voice and we are determined to ensure their voices speak loud and clear. The voice of the child will always define what we do.

Andy Elvin
Chief Executive

About this survey – our approach and key findings

One of the main ways we gather the views of young people is through a regular survey. In previous years we have done this using a large-scale paper questionnaire. But last year, our TACT-wide Children’s Champions group told us they wanted to do things differently. They said previous surveys were too long and boring; they didn’t want another form to fill in and would prefer to talk through the issues with someone they trust.

So we changed our approach and interviewed 84 young people across TACT face-to-face. The children we spoke to ranged from 9-18 in age. Our experienced social workers or children’s resource workers spoke to the children and young people they knew. To make sure they were comfortable, the children and young people got to choose where the interview took place. As a result, we’ve been able to build a picture of what life feels like for young people in foster care, driven by what they’ve told us. The next section of this report shares what they told us about belonging, about being heard, about boundaries, the challenges of adolescence and about their experience of care as a whole. They make some interesting points and they’ve given us food for thought (see the last section about our future plans). Broadly, here’s what we found out;

Our young people can see that being in care is right for them...

88% of young people interviewed now feel that being in care is the right thing for them compared to 62% who thought coming into care was the right thing for them at the time.

Our young people feel they belong...

95% of young people feel part of their carer’s family. 97% of young people believe they are treated the same as the carer’s own family.

Our young people are listened to... but they would like their opinion to make more of a difference

94% of young people feel able to express their opinions about things that matter to them. 58% of young people feel their opinions always or usually make a difference to the decisions about their life. Only 6% of the people we spoke to said their opinion never makes a difference.

Our young people can see why boundaries are important and respect them...

2/3 of young people are always given a reason if they are not allowed to go out, and 80% always or usually agree with it.

Our young people think a lot of the people who look after them...

87% of young people rate their TACT carer as good or very good. 96% of the young people we spoke to told us their carer makes them feel good about themselves. 89% of the young people we spoke to spend leisure time with their foster carers and enjoy being with them.

Our young people recognise how hard their carers work for them...

95% of young people think carers should have their own free time.

SECTION 2 – WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK: OUR SURVEY RESULTS

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BELONG?

Having somewhere to call home and feeling accepted, safe and secure are all founded on belonging. Feeling a part of something helps young people recover from and deal with past hurt and trauma and develop positive and trusting relationships. Belonging builds self-confidence and self-belief and helps young people succeed.



Because...

WE'RE INCLUDED...

"MY TACT CARERS ARE THE ONLY FAMILY WHO HAVE EVER TREATED ME AS THEY WOULD THEIR OWN."

(17, FEMALE)

WE'RE TREATED THE SAME AS THE OTHER CHILDREN WE LIVE WITH...

"THEY TREAT ME LIKE THEIR OWN DAUGHTER, THEY DON'T TREAT ME ANY DIFFERENTLY."

(12, FEMALE)

"SHE DOESN'T LEAVE ME OUT."

(12, FEMALE)

WE'RE LOVED AND CARED FOR...

97%

of young people believe they are treated the same as the carer's own family

"I FEEL PART OF THE FAMILY BY THE LOVE AND AFFECTION SHOWN TO ME" (17, MALE)

AND IF NOT, WHY NOT?

"SOMETIMES THE RULES THAT YOU CAN'T DO A SPECIFIC THING ISOLATES YOU, LIKE WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I WASN'T ALLOWED TO SLEEP OUT." (16, FEMALE)

"I DON'T WANT TO BE PART OF A FAMILY, I HAVE MY OWN FAMILY."

(16, MALE)

- They choose not to be
- They feel excluded
- They don't get on with people in the household
- The fostering rules and regulations can make them feel different

BEING HEARD AND EXPRESSING OPINIONS

Why is it important for young people to be able to express their opinions and for us to listen?

Young people are the experts in their own experience: they have a right to be heard, like anyone else. Being heard helps young people to explore and make sense of their feelings and experiences, feel a sense of control over their own lives, and to develop lifelong communication skills.

By listening, we can better understand their aspirations and ambitions and make decisions that best fit with young people's own views and preferences.



...feel their opinions always or usually make a difference to the decisions about their life.

"SOMETIMES WHAT I AM THINKING IS NOT REALISTIC. MY CARER LISTENS TO MY OPINION AND WILL SUPPORT ME IF SHE CAN." (17, MALE)



...said their opinion never makes a difference.

"IF IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT THEN IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE AS LONG AS I EXPLAIN IT." (18, FEMALE)

WHEN HAS A YOUNG PERSON'S OPINION MADE A DIFFERENCE?

Care; Coming into care, placement decisions and contact.*
Education; Moving school or choosing a college.
Social; Going out, social life, after-school activities and hobbies, choosing food or clothes, decorating room.

*For others this was a key problem area.

Adults make the decisions... young people do not always have much say

"I FEEL I SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO MAKE MORE DECISIONS SO I CAN LEARN FROM MY MISTAKES AND MESS UP IF THAT'S WHAT MAY HAPPEN." (16, MALE)



...feel able to express their opinions about things that matter to them.

WHY ARE BOUNDARIES

IMPORTANT AND WHAT DIFFERENCE DO THEY MAKE?

Having rules to live by re-establishes normal family life and helps young people to feel and be safe. Boundaries also allow them to be a child once more – in their life before care they may have had to grow up too fast. Having clear boundaries enables young people to manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviour and to develop trusting relationships with their foster carer. Better relationships mean less placement disruption and the chance for young people to thrive and succeed.



...say they can choose which friends they go out with.



...say they can choose when they can go out.



...say they can choose where they go out.*

*Those who answered no tended to be slightly younger than the average age of all those who took part (14.5). More girls than boys answered no to these questions.



...are always given a reason if they are not allowed to go out.

Those that didn't answer said this was because they had never had an issue with not being allowed out:



BOUNDARIES ARE GOOD BECAUSE...

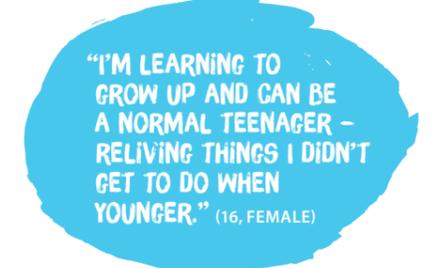
They keep us **SAFE**



They help us **SUCCEED**



They let us be **CHILDREN**



Boundaries work both ways. 95% of young people think carers should have their own free time.

"THEY HAVE BEEN LOOKING AFTER US ALL DAY AND NEED A REST."
(14, FEMALE)

"GOZ HE'S GOT A LIFE AS WELL."
(17, MALE)

"SHE NEEDS TO HAVE TIME TO HERSELF BECAUSE SHE WORKS REALLY HARD LOOKING AFTER US."
(13, FEMALE)

MANAGING ADOLESCENCE

THE CHALLENGES OF GROWING UP: AND OF GROWING UP IN CARE

Adolescence is a critical period for children in care. Brain development during adolescence is at its fastest apart from in the first two years of life, and adolescents experience many hormonal and physical changes. Self esteem drops and adolescents focus on the 'Who am I?' question. Young people often re-process earlier life experiences, and deal with difficult thoughts and feelings about their birth family. Foster carers have to navigate shifting boundaries as young people develop greater independence and autonomy.

HERE'S HOW TACT CARERS SUPPORT LOOKED-AFTER CHILDREN THROUGH ADOLESCENCE...

They build their self-esteem and help them feel good about themselves:

"THEY COMPLIMENT ME, HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ME, PRAISE ME FOR ACHIEVING GOOD THINGS AND ENCOURAGE ME TO DO THINGS." (17, FEMALE)

"THEY TELL ME WHEN I'VE DONE REALLY WELL IN SCHOOL. IF SOMETHING'S DIFFICULT THEY HELP ME IMPROVE AND I GET A GOOD FEELING OUT OF IT." (14, FEMALE)

They listen, then respond to what the children in their care say...

"ME AND MY BROTHER WERE IN DIFFERENT PLACEMENTS, BUT NOW WE ARE IN THE SAME ONE BECAUSE PEOPLE LISTENED TO MY OPINION." (13, FEMALE)

They show they care by setting reasonable boundaries...

"I FEEL THAT WHAT I SAY IS USUALLY LISTENED TO. I AM ASKED A LOT ABOUT WHAT I LIKE FROM FOSTER CARERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS." (11, MALE)

"I HAD A PROBLEM AT SCHOOL AND MY CARER HELPED ME SORT IT OUT. SHE IS REALLY GOOD AT SUPPORTING ME." (15, FEMALE)

"I USUALLY ACCEPT THE REASON FOR NOT BEING ALLOWED OUT AS I KNOW IT'S BECAUSE MY CARERS CARE ABOUT ME, BUT I DON'T ALWAYS AGREE." (13, FEMALE)

"I AM ALWAYS GIVEN A REASON IF I CAN'T GO OUT. IT IS USUALLY IF I'VE BEEN GROUNDED FOR BAD BEHAVIOUR, WHICH I ACCEPT. I DON'T LIKE IT BUT I THINK I'M TREATED FAIRLY." (14, MALE)

They let them be children...

"BEING WITH MY CARER IS ALLOWING ME TO GROW UP AT THE RIGHT PACE, PREPARING ME FOR WHEN I HAVE TO LEAVE." (17, FEMALE)

"IT'S GIVEN ME TIME TO GROW UP AND CHANGE." (17, FEMALE)

But recognise that young people are growing up and becoming more independent...

"MY CARER HAS BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE REGARDING MY EDUCATION. I RECENTLY MADE THE DECISION TO LEAVE THE COLLEGE COURSE I HAVE BEEN DOING AS I WASN'T ENJOYING IT. MY CARER HELPED AND SUPPORTED ME TO SECURE AN APPRENTICESHIP AT A LOCAL SCHOOL." (17, FEMALE)

CARE IS A POSITIVE PLACE TO BE

All children deserve a loving and happy home. Care can be transformational, giving young people a safe and secure place to recover from past trauma, be a child, grow and develop and discover who they are. Care offers young people new experiences and opportunities that encourage their aspirations and ambition and enable them to succeed. Most of all, care shows young people that adults believe in them and will speak up for them. All of this leads to better long-term outcomes for young people.



...feel that being in care is the right thing for them, compared to 62% who thought coming into care was the right thing for them at the time.

"I NEVER FELT SAFE AT HOME BUT I ALWAYS FEEL SAFE IN MY FOSTER HOME." (14, FEMALE)

"BECAUSE I'VE HAD A BETTER LIFE AND I'VE MADE LOTS OF PROGRESS AT SCHOOL. THERE WERE ALWAYS LOTS OF ARGUMENTS AT HOME AND THERE AREN'T ANY HERE." (13, FEMALE)

Over half of the young people we spoke to had met their carers before they moved in with them, which helped them with the transition...

"WE MET TWICE AND SO IT WAS EASIER TO MOVE IN, NOT A BIG SHOCK, AS WE HAD TIME TO TALK AND GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER." (15, FEMALE)

"I HAD SOME TIME TO THINK AND MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT MOVING IN WITH HER." (16, FEMALE)



...rate their TACT carer as good or very good*

*Quite a few of the young people we spoke to wished they could have picked 'excellent'.

WHY?

"BOTH CARERS ARE ALWAYS THERE FOR ME. THEY GIVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE THE LIFE I SHOULD HAVE LIVED." (15, FEMALE)

"THEY REALLY CARE ABOUT ME AND DO THINGS TO MAKE ME HAPPY. THIS IS MY FAMILY NOW." (12, MALE)



...we spoke to told us their carer makes them feel good about themselves.

- They help them to understand and manage their feelings and behaviour
- They take their opinion into account
- They offer praise, support and encouragement
- They care and make them feel important



...we spoke to spend leisure time with their foster carers and enjoy being with them...

"WE HAVE A LAUGH, JOKE AND BE STUPID." (14, FEMALE)

"THEY GIVE ME POSITIVE ATTENTION WHICH I HAVE NEVER HAD BEFORE." (15, FEMALE)

TOP FIVE THINGS TO DO AS A FAMILY...

1. Physical activities and sports
2. Eating out
3. Shopping
4. Going on holidays
5. Going to the cinema

SECTION 3 – WHY IT WORKS

WHAT TACT DOES

TO MAKE LIFE BETTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. Our job is to challenge the prejudice that looked after children often suffer, help heal the trauma many have experienced, and encourage and support young people to realise their aspirations.

The results of this survey show that TACT is an incredibly positive place for young people to be in care, and we want to celebrate the fantastic job that our carers and staff do. Actively listening to the young people we care for helps us understand what we need to keep doing and what we need to do better. But before we look at the changes we plan on making in response to what our young people have told us, we want to run through what we are doing right now that's helping young people achieve their potential.

We believe TACT works because...

We listen to the children and young people in our care and involve them in planning and decision making

Listening to young people's views helps us understand what the young people in our care think we are doing well and what they want us to do better. This allows us to plan and deliver services and activities across TACT that are responsive to the needs of children and young people.

Effective participation should always be driven by the needs of children and young people. It should make a difference rather than tick boxes. Involving children and young people in TACT's work and hearing what they have to say is pivotal to what we do. Here are some of the ways we ensure children and young people in TACT care have a voice:

We are building effective participation structures

Children's Champions: a group of young people from across the country who let us know their views about care and TACT. Last year a group of young people from Children's Champions met with our Trustees to tell them what they thought of participation in TACT and how they wanted it to change.

Local groups: as a result of young people's feedback we are establishing smaller groups in each TACT area that offer participation opportunities alongside regional activities. Each local group will send representatives to Children's Champions.

Participation Management Group: a new group that will strengthen the links between Children's Champions and TACT's governance and decision-making structures. The group will include a Trustee, senior managers, a foster carer, and two young people chosen by Children's Champions, giving young people a direct voice in governance structures for the first time.

Children's Resource Workers support young people in each area to attend local groups, take part in activities, and promote opportunities to get involved.

Children's Participation Group: a joint group run with Coram Voice to enable younger children to tell us how they feel about being in TACT care.

We offer opportunities for young people to have their say on specific issues

As well as enabling us to tailor services to the needs and aspirations of children and young people, listening to their feedback gives us the authority and conviction to speak out about the issues they face as looked after children. And by taking part, it helps young people develop their own voice, giving them the confidence to speak out themselves. For example:

All Party Parliamentary Group: TACT supports young people to attend these regular meetings which help people in parliament understand what it is like to be in foster care so they can help to make the care system better.

Consultations: throughout the year the government publishes consultations in order to gather views on proposed new policies and laws. When TACT responds to the government we include the views of young people, foster carers and social workers. We usually gather these views by running focus groups or attending Children's Champions meetings.

Development of TACT policy and campaigning messages: we are currently seeking young people's views on TACT's 'Call for Action' to be published before the 2015 General Election which will set out the areas we think the next government should work on to improve the care system.

One-off events: last year we took a group of young people and foster carers to the House of Lords to share their views and experiences about leaving care. We are currently planning a Question Time event to take place after the General Election

for young people to ask politicians responsible for children in care questions about what they are going to do to make the care system better.

We encourage young people to get involved in local participation mechanisms such as joining their local authority's Children in Care Council and taking part in the reviews of their care plan.

We work hard to choose the best foster carers with the qualities to help children fulfil their true potential

We involve young people in the recruitment and training of foster carers and TACT staff Young people are an essential part of our foster carer recruitment process. They routinely take part in foster carer training, foster carer assessment and panels. Young people are sometimes involved in the recruitment of new staff, including our Chief Executive, and we are aiming to ensure this happens more consistently across TACT.

Talking to children and young people has helped us understand what qualities and behaviours young people value in their foster carers. We've tailored our recruitment to ensure that foster carers are fully equipped to provide loving, stable and happy homes. The starting point – a caring nature and a spare room – is followed by rigorous assessment, a lot of talking, training and checks to make sure that fostering is right for those that want to be carers – and right for the children they will care for.

But let's leave it to the children and young people of TACT to explain what makes a good carer...

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CARER?

TACT transforms outcomes for vulnerable children. Our foster carers are the frontline in giving children who cannot live with their own parents the chance for a brighter future. They are ordinary people doing an extraordinary job.

REQUIREMENTS?



BUT MOST OF ALL A GOOD CARER WANTS THE BEST FOR THE CHILDREN THEY LOOK AFTER

Young people agree, and added these qualities to the list...

HELPFUL, HONEST, POSITIVE, TRUSTING, FUN, FAIR, INCLUSIVE, ABLE TO CREATE A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT, KIND AND EASY TO GET ON WITH.

WHAT OUR FOSTER CARERS SAY...

"FOR ME, BEING A FOSTER CARER IS THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD. IT'S CHALLENGING, BUT ALSO SO REWARDING. YOU'RE ON A JOURNEY FROM THE MOMENT YOU GET THE CHILDREN."
GARETH, TACT FOSTER CARER.

"OUR FAMILY IS COMPLETE. I'M SO GLAD WE GAVE OUR CHILDREN A CHANGE - THEY ARE THE EXTRA SPARK WE WERE MISSING."
SARAH, TACT FOSTER CARER.

"BECOMING A FOSTER CARER IS THE BEST AND MOST REWARDING THING I'VE EVER DONE. WHEN YOU SEE THE CHANGES YOU CAN MAKE TO A YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE IT'S GREAT."
COLIN, TACT FOSTER CARER.

We're with our foster carers all the way – they don't work alone

After our carers are approved they become part of the TACT family. This is not a job to take on alone. A dedicated helpline offering support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, an allocated social worker to offer on-going support and a comprehensive training package are just the starting point.

The foundation of all our training is our Fostering Changes course. The majority of looked after children will have experienced abuse or neglect before entering care. At the very least they will have experienced the trauma of not being able to live with their birth family.

The course helps carers build trust with the children placed with them, and to start to deal with the trauma they have experienced in their lives that brought them into care. The course also takes carers through developing strong relationships and introducing boundaries, helping children and young people who may have lived chaotic lives to see the value in keeping them safe, happy and healthy. Fostering Changes is also the intervention with the strongest evidence base in supporting educational outcomes of children in care, and we are proud to have rolled it out across TACT. It is a requirement for all TACT social workers and children's resource workers and so far 60% of our foster carers have completed the training.

After introductory training, we tailor courses and support based on the individual needs of the foster family. For instance, we run small groups for carers managing very difficult behaviour to facilitate peer support, and we provide specialist training for those dealing with young people with more complex needs. We offer clinical supervision for difficult cases and use an organisation called Shades to offer bespoke support to carers in managing extremely challenging behaviour.

How we support our carers

- dedicated helpline offering 24/7 support
- allocated social workers throughout assessment and placement
- comprehensive training
- regular meetings and support groups
- a competitive professional fee
- regular events for carers and children
- award ceremonies recognising the work of our carers and their families and the achievements of young people in TACT care.

Every TACT office has a bespoke training plan based on the needs of carers in that area. Areas have identified the need for specific training on issues such as self-harm, drugs and alcohol, and social networking and have implemented appropriate training.

We make sure care is a positive place to be

It was obvious from the comments made by the young people who took part in the survey that they enjoy spending time with their carers.

For them, excellent care means going beyond the basics and building relationships based on mutual interests or being supported in pursuing a sport or a hobby. Some mentioned just having a laugh or chilling out together – the things that make family life possible, and enjoyable. So once a foster carer is approved, matching them to the right child or children begins, and it is a process TACT takes very seriously: getting that match right can make all the difference in a placement and to a child's life.

After a child is in placement, TACT support continues for both them and their foster family. There is always someone at TACT available for advice, or just for a chat and to act as a sounding board. And we encourage foster carers to talk to one another and compare notes. It's good to know that someone else is facing the same challenges.

Then there are TACT events: Our Big Weekends and Little Weekends bring looked after children from all over the UK together for two days of fun and thrills! They are a chance to relax, to step away from everyday life, and to meet other young people in foster care and compare experiences. The Big and Little Weekends are just a couple of examples of the many local and national events run by TACT with the children and their carers in mind.

"I FEEL [BEING IN CARE] IS HELPING ME ACHIEVE WHAT I WANT IN LATER LIFE, AND GIVING ME LOTS OF OPTIONS."

(16, FEMALE)

SECTION 4 – RESPONDING AND PLANNING AHEAD

HOW WE PLAN TO CONTINUE IMPROVING

As well as taking on board all the positives from the results of the questionnaire and celebrating what we do well, we've looked at any areas of concern raised by the young people we spoke to. Some were personal to them, some were more generally felt. We are always looking at ways to develop what we do, improve our services and respond to those in our care.

Here's what was identified and how we plan to address it:

“I HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT MY PLACEMENT.”

In two cases, the responses young people gave in their interviews raised issues of concern that we followed up with them and their foster carers. Whilst we have regular mechanisms in place to identify and address concerns, this survey gave young people a further opportunity to discuss anything troubling them. In one case, the young person had not previously made anyone aware of the issues bothering them.

“WE WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR CARERS BEFORE MOVING IN WITH THEM.”

We already provide all children coming into TACT care with a welcome pack which includes information about the carer's home and family. However, the content and style of the information is not consistent across the organisation. We will review our existing information and work with young

people through Children's Champions to develop content and formats that work better for them. We will aim to ensure that practice is consistent across TACT, and that every child receives information about their carer before they move in. Where it is not possible to provide this information beforehand, e.g. in emergency placements, we will ensure the young person receives it as soon as they move in.

“WE WANT CARERS WHO KNOW HOW TO SUPPORT US.”

We will use the findings from this survey to continue to build the skills and awareness of our foster carers, to ensure they continue to offer the highest quality care. We will include an outline of what young people look for in a carer in all foster carer application packs, so that potential carers hear from young people about what is important to them from the earliest stages of recruitment. Using this outline in our foster carer recruitment will help us establish clear expectations of the qualities we need in our foster carers, and what high quality care looks like. We will also use the findings in our training programmes to help our foster carers better understand young people's aspirations and ambitions, and to demonstrate the importance of providing support, challenge and encouragement.

“WE WANT THE CHANCE TO MEET OUR CARERS BEFORE MOVING IN WITH THEM, AND TO HAVE A CHOICE ABOUT PLACEMENTS.”

We will include the issue of placement choice and the desire to meet carers before living with them in our Call to Action for the new government, and will use the views and stories of young people in our policy influencing work with people who make decisions about the care system.

“IT'S IMPORTANT TO US TO GIVE OUR OPINIONS, BUT WE DON'T WANT TOO MANY LONG SURVEYS TO FILL IN.”

TACT will conduct an interview-based children's survey like this every three years. In between we will run a number of smaller, thematic surveys on the most important issues to young people in our care. Based on the issues raised in this survey, and in discussion with Children's Champions, our next thematic survey will be on education issues.

We will complete this survey in 2015. We will continue to embed TACT's new participation strategy and grow our local groups, giving more children in TACT care the opportunity to get involved and have their say without having to fill in lots of forms. The new Participation Management Group will give young people chosen by Children's Champions the opportunity to have a direct say in TACT governance structures for the first time.

“WE REALLY VALUE THE CHANCE TO MEET OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND DO FUN ACTIVITIES.”

We will use the views of young people gathered in this survey to strengthen our case for funding for local and national activities. Events such as TACT's Big Weekend and Little Weekend offer young people in TACT care the chance to connect with their peers, have new experiences, and develop their skills and confidence.

WHAT WOULD YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE MORE OF A SAY IN?

We were especially interested in hearing about what young people would like to have a greater influence over in their lives. What would they change, given the opportunity? Right at the top was more of a say in contact with their birth family, followed by more choice and control over placements and leaving care. Chores get a mention too – but what adolescent doesn't want to have to do fewer chores?!

1. CONTACT

"I ALSO THINK I SHOULD HAVE MORE SAY IN HAVING CONTACT WITH MY BROTHERS AS I HAVEN'T SEEN THEM AND I REALLY WORRY ABOUT THEM." (14, FEMALE)

"ONLY ONE THING REALLY MATTERS. I TELL PEOPLE ABOUT THIS ALL THE TIME AND NOTHING EVER CHANGES. SEEING MY BROTHER AND SISTER. I ALWAYS ASK, BUT NEVER GET TO SEE THEM. I WANT THEM TO KNOW ME AND I WANT TO KNOW THEM." (13, FEMALE)

"MY YOUNGER BROTHERS ARE STILL LIVING AT HOME AND IT MATTERS TO ME THAT THEY ARE OK." (14, FEMALE)

2. PLACEMENTS

"I WASN'T HAPPY IN MY OTHER PLACEMENT, SO MY OPINION MADE A DIFFERENCE. ALSO, ME AND MY BROTHER WERE IN DIFFERENT PLACEMENTS, BUT NOW WE ARE IN THE SAME ONE BECAUSE PEOPLE LISTENED TO MY OPINION." (13, FEMALE)

"I HAD NEVER HEARD OF THE TOWN WE WERE MOVING TO. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE TO HAVE SOME MORE INFORMATION AND MORE CHOICE IN WHERE WE WERE PUT." (17, FEMALE)

3. THE FUTURE

"I WANT TO STAY HERE AFTER I AM 18 AS I KNOW I WON'T BE READY TO LEAVE. I THINK IT SHOULD BE MY DECISION WHEN I LEAVE." (17, FEMALE)

"MY OPINION DOESN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO WHEN I HAVE TO MOVE OUT. I DON'T WANT TO MOVE OUT AT 18 BUT MY OPINION DOESN'T MATTER." (17, FEMALE)

AND THESE GOT A MENTION TOO...

MOBILE PHONES AND USE OF THE INTERNET

"ALL MY FRIENDS HAVE GOT A MOBILE PHONE AND I HAVEN'T. I THINK I SHOULD HAVE ONE BUT I'VE BEEN TOLD I HAVE TO BE 14 OR 15." (13, FEMALE)

SOCIAL LIFE e.g. curfew times, where they can go out.

"I THINK I SHOULD HAVE MORE SAY IN DAY TO DAY THINGS LIKE WHAT TIME I GO TO BED OR WHAT TIME I HAVE TO BE HOME." (13, FEMALE)

CHOICE OF CLOTHES AND FOOD

"I THINK I SHOULD HAVE MORE SAY IN WHAT WE HAVE TO EAT, BECAUSE SOMETIMES I HAVE FOOD THAT I DON'T WANT. I THINK I SHOULD HAVE MORE SAY IN WHAT I WEAR BECAUSE SOMETIMES I AM TOLD WHAT I LIKE ISN'T SUITABLE WHEN I AM BUYING CLOTHES." (13, FEMALE)

CHORES

"I DON'T HAVE A SAY IN ANYTHING I DO. MY CARER DECIDES WHAT I SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO. I THINK I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DO SO MANY CHORES." (16, FEMALE)

"I DIDN'T WANT TO GO CAMPING RECENTLY. I'D PREFER TO DO MY OWN THING BUT FEEL I HAVE TO BE PART OF THE FAMILY." (16, MALE)

NOW OVER TO YOU...

We presented an overview of the headline messages from this survey to our national Children's Champions group in October 2014, and discussed what TACT should do next.

We also shared our findings with our national Foster Carer Representative's group and TACT Trustees early this year.

A copy of this report has been sent to every foster carer household and every young person in TACT care. If you have any additional thoughts or feedback on the themes in this report, please get in touch and share them with us. We are always happy to hear from anyone who can add to our knowledge and experience in making life for looked after children better.

Call us on: **020 8695 8142**

Email us: foster@tactcare.org.uk

"I GET CALLED "MY SISTER" BY MY CARER'S OWN CHILDREN, WHICH IS GREAT. I NEVER FELT CALLED OUT AS A CARE KID." (17, FEMALE)

"CARE IS BETTER FOR ME - I'M CALMER, HAPPIER AND DOING WELL AT SCHOOL. I ALWAYS HAD TO LOOK AFTER MY MUM." (15, MALE)

"IT IS IMPORTANT THAT I AM TRUSTED BY MY CARER. MY CARER DOES THIS. COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE AROUND ME IS MOST IMPORTANT." (16, MALE)

"I WANTED TO HAVE SOMEONE TO CARE FOR ME, SOMEONE TO CALL MUM AND DAD. THAT'S HAPPENED FOR ME AND I THINK THAT'S THE THING THAT DOES MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE." (17, FEMALE)



**“IT MATTERS TO ME
IF PEOPLE DON’T LISTEN
TO ME WHEN I KNOW
I AM RIGHT.”** (14, FEMALE)

Find out more about TACT

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**“MY CARERS SAVED ME FROM
BEING NEGLECTED AND I WAS
KICKED OUT OF SCHOOL. IF I
WAS STILL AT HOME I WOULD
NOT BE AT SCHOOL.”** (15, FEMALE)

**“I TAKE PART IN STUFF AND
I GET INVOLVED WITH DECISIONS.
I FEEL THAT THIS IS MY HOME
AND I LIKE THIS. THIS MAKES ME
FEEL IN THE FAMILY.”** (15, MALE)



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