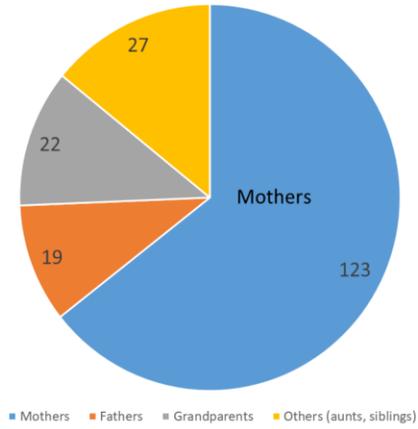


# PAR

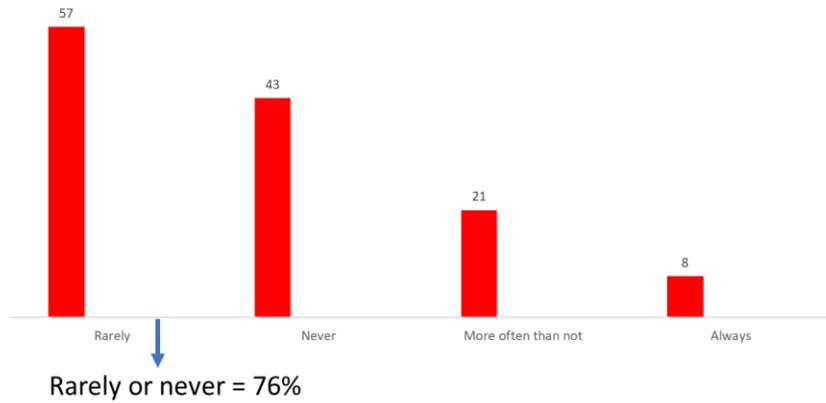
Parent Advocacy and Rights

Parent experience of the  
children's care system In  
Scotland

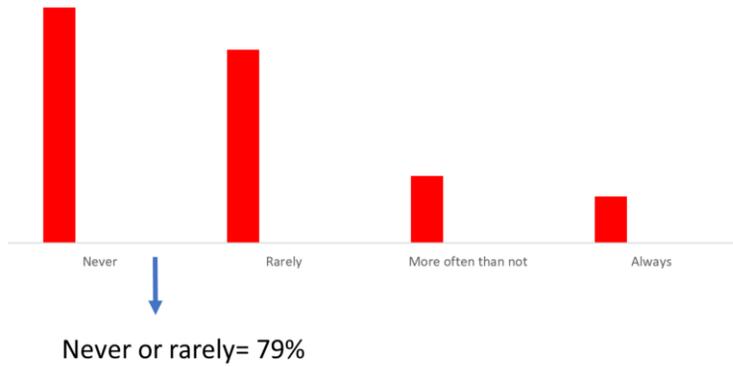
## Who Took Part? (n=191)



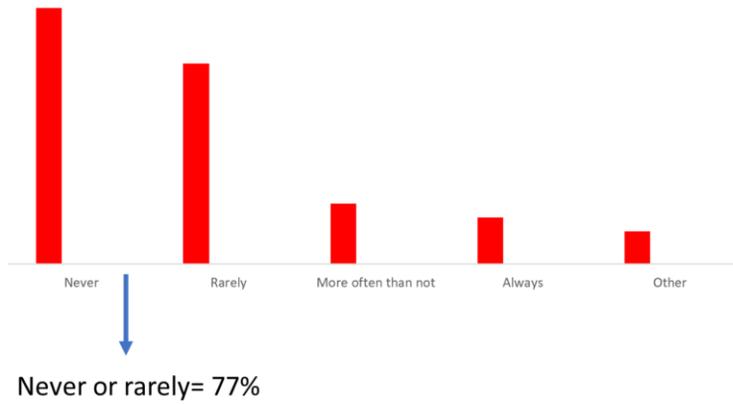
**Child Protection processes.**  
Included in decisions made about  
your child? (n=129)



# Reports and invitations to meetings at least 7 days in advance? (n=129)



Given opportunity to share views before and during key meetings? (n=128)



Given opportunity to share views before and during key meetings?

"I was normally too upset to be able to talk or get my views across"

"I felt talked over and ignored"

#### Meetings in General

I was normally too upset to be able to talk or get my views across.

I had no one who could provide support or be a voice for me at these meetings. I felt talked over and ignored.

Was given the opportunity but not listened too.

Was sometimes but they never listened or took on board anything or would come back with something that wasn't true

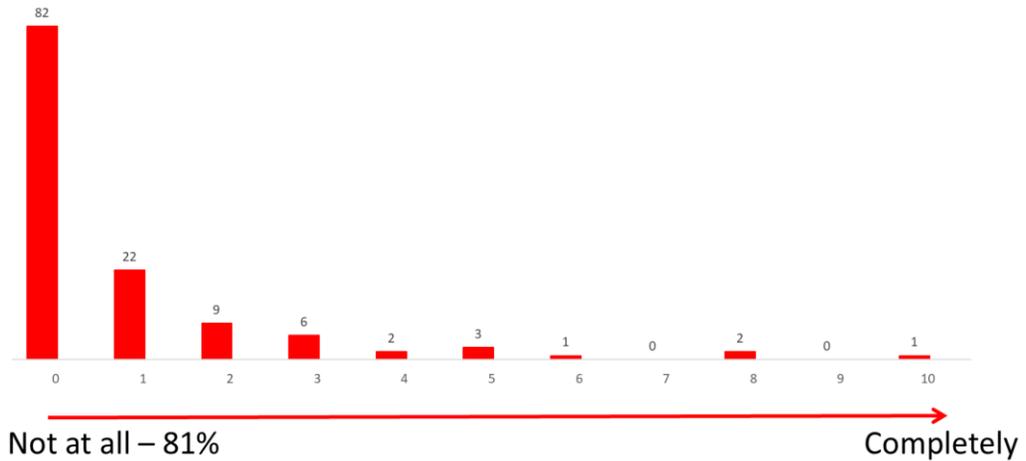
At the beginning but I was asking challenging questions about mental health, school refusal and The Education Act.

Anything I sent in writing prior to meetings was ignored and disregarded. Anything I sent in writing following meetings was ignored and disregarded. Minutes of meetings were incredibly inaccurate and when challenged about the inaccuracies I was, again, ignored and comments disregarded.

## Given but ignored

Meetings dominated by social workers both vocally and in numbers. Decisions had been made before the meeting. Language used by them was deliberate to cause anger. Minutes of meetings either given as you went into the next meeting or never sent or handed over, even under SAR. Children's Hearings dominated by social workers reports and Panel Members reliant on them and would not listen to parent, relevant person or legal representative.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not at all, 10 being completely) how much did you feel you could trust the social worker working with your family? (n= 128)



Any further comments regarding your experiences? For instance did the child protection investigation affect your feelings of self-worth? Did the investigation affect your health? Is there enough support for parents during such investigations? What could be different?

"They said my house décor was outdated, and in disrepair..."

"Our social worker was off sick more than she was working and apparently another 4 social workers were also off sick and this left some people, us included, having no social worker for months, this has only just been remedied and hopefully things can improve with the proper support in place but only time will tell"

I lost all faith in myself as a parent, lost my confidence. What little trust I had left was destroyed. I felt like I was under constant scrutiny and criticism. Lost a lot of friends as social work wanted to run checks on anyone that came into my house. I have no social life now. I was so busy maintaining my home to high standards to stop them writing negative things in reports that my children lost their mum. I took loans to improve the house... If there was support for parents, someone who could be on the parents' side and speak for them if necessary that would make a big difference.

I was just a "down and out to them". I dont think they believed I would stick to my recovery like I have.

The child protection process was horrific. It robbed me of time with my children. Time I will never at back that cannot be reversed. At no point by most professionals was I treated with no dignity at all.

I was a member of the wide family (not the immediate parents). We all felt completely excluded by social workers. They not only failed to speak to us and consult with us and consider us as part of wider support for the children.

I want justice, this is not right them kids are up for adoption, never even got offered supervision order, nothing. The whole family are traumatised and we want our kids back, they are not being treated good in fostercare, unexplained injuries, crying at night etc, speech problems, they've been in care since May 2018.

I have been made to feel like some kind of 3 headed monster, they split my whole family up, they made me homeless and wouldn't even let me go home for clothes, stoma supplies, jacket etc in the middle of winter. Couldn't have moved my son further away if they tried 5 hrs away. Never got to meet foster carers and after also being a foster carer for 40years never have we, never met the parents of the children we looked after. I got told I was allowed to text twice a week then got told, that none of my messages have ever been past on and never would. They said if my pic was shown he would throw it away and start self harming he was probably wondering where I was( he was autistic. The last words he said was mummy sit down.

It was avoidable, but contact was planned by SW to be on mother's day - we each had our memories of 14 other such days and the 200 mile journey there was too much for me. Then there was the journey home!

My own care experience was used to show I never learned to parent, and my right to bear a child was questioned which flips to query my child's right to exist as Autistic. Heavily eugenic. There is no support for parents.

During the investigation I have been hospitalised 3 times with breathing difficulties. I am a retired RGN with over 40 years in nursing yet my professionalism has been put in question.

Help/support is needed social workers need to go in and sort out the family get to know them get to the root of the problems tackle and mend the family. Do the job they were meant for. To be a blessing for a family. Not an enemy of the worse kind.

And though the wildly inaccurate child plans for these 2 children have been repeatedly challenged by the parent, in writing, these 17 month old, inaccurate child plans are still on file and in use and have been shared inappropriately with 3rd parties. This is not GIRFEC. This in no way has been in these children's best interests. It has caused them a great deal of detriment.

Many grandparents have been informed they are not an interested party. How wrong is that?

Our social worker was off sick more than she was working and apparently another 4 social workers were also off sick and this left some people us included having no

social worker for months, this has only just been remedied and hopefully things can improve with the proper support in place but only time will tell.

I was completely sidelined and ignored by very incompetent people.

I felt like the worst parent in the world.

...this could have been avoided if education systems recognised conditions such as autism, adhd etc from an early age, that parents are listened to and worked together rather than the parental blame game culture

I took a stroke in 2013 because they stole my 4 year old grandson Leon unlawfully at ... children's hearing with no court orders lots more to say but it hurts too much



Social work reports were frequently handed to us in the waiting room of hearings, where we often discovered for the first time, anecdotes which were simply untrue, based on "community reports". Motivations were ascribed to myself, my partner and my children which again, were simply untrue, and any attempt to clarify in the hearing were brushed off. When the children attempted to clarify things in hearings we were subsequently accused of coaching them. There was no ability to get any erroneous information corrected. When this was attempted, we were continually encouraged "not to dwell on the past", and accused of being more interested in paperwork than the welfare of our children.

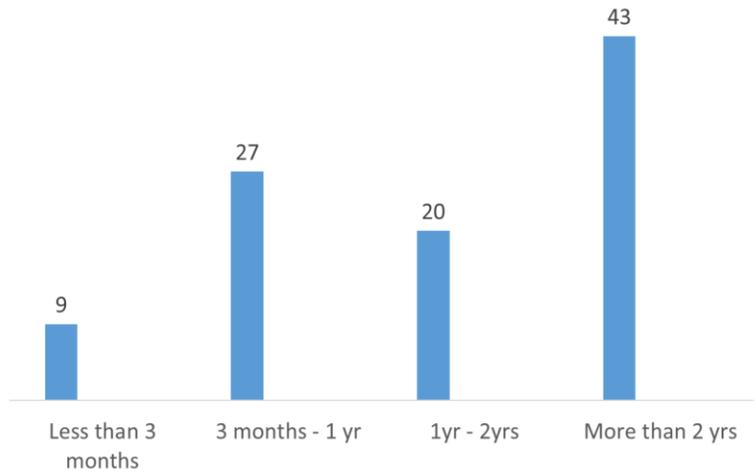
## Removal to Care.

Has your child(ren) been removed? (n=119)

Yes 94

No 25

How long has or was  
your child in care?

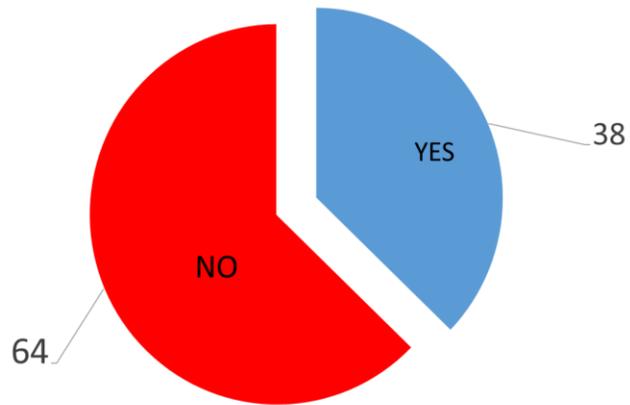


Were your children placed with a family member? (n=96)

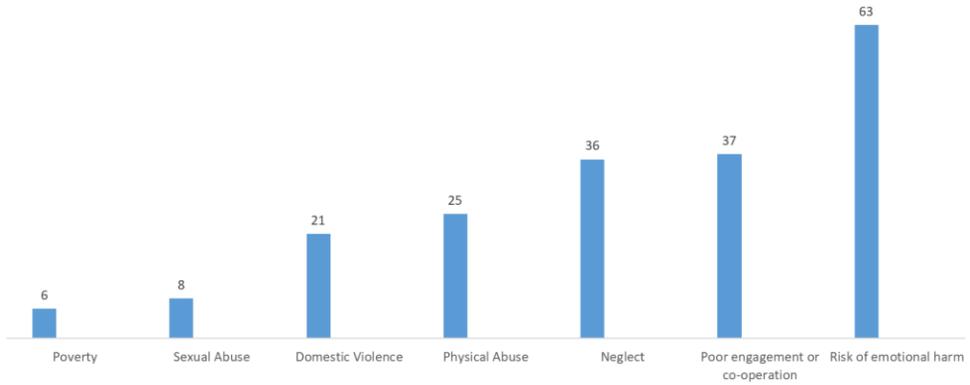
Yes and they continue to be	22
Yes but only after a period in foster care	9
Family was not approved	19
Family was never considered	46

Have your children been separated	Yes = 63
from each other? (n=103)	No = 40

Were you given clear reasons for removal? (n=102)

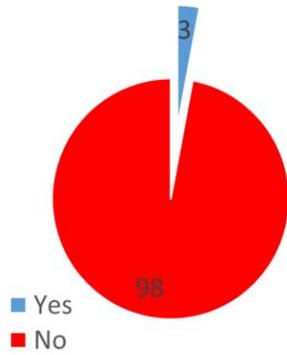


Official reasons for removal that were given (n=100)

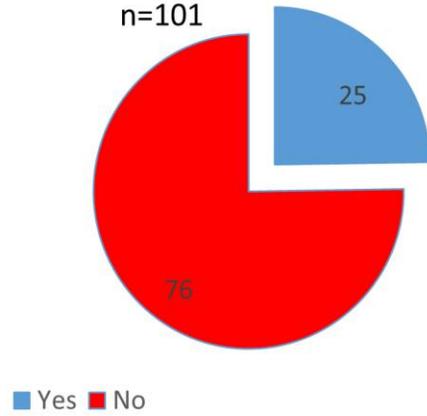


Plus: 25/100 respondents ticked the box entitled Medical/Disability/Special Educational Needs/Fabricated and Induced Illness (25%)

Was there any support after removal of your child? n=101



Has Your Child Been Returned To You? n=101



82/86 said there was no support following **the return** of their child

## Contact 1

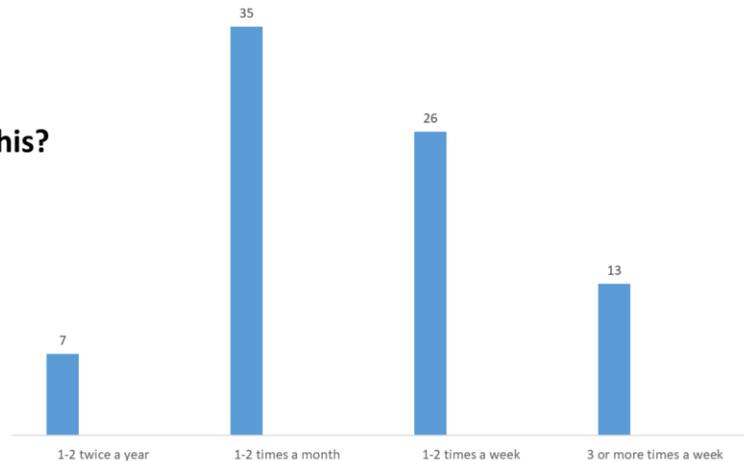
Do you have/ did you have contact with your 'looked after child'?

Yes – 81

No – 20

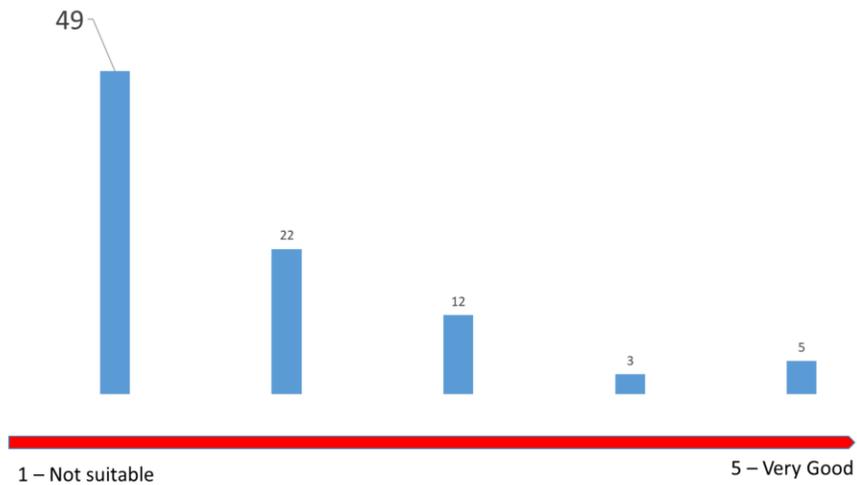
How frequent is/was this?

(n=81)



When asked 'Is/was contact meeting the needs of your child?' 42/97 (43%) replied at the far end of the scale that it was not. 6/97 (6%) were at the far end of being absolutely in agreement that contact was meeting/had met the needs of their child or children. 5 parents were neutral. The others were in between with the majority of this group replying in the negative as to whether contact had met /was meeting the needs of their child or children

## Contact 2: Facilities (n=91)



We asked: Were contact facilities suitable for you and your child, e.g. premises, catering, travel to and from? And asked for rating from 1 star (not suitable) to 5 stars (very good).

### Contact 3

Supervised? (n=94)

Yes - 80

No - 14

Did your contact change over time? Increase or decrease? (n=88)

Increased – 21

Decreased – 67

Was contact cancelled regularly by the local authority or regularly disrupted?  
(n=91)

Yes – 60

No – 31

### Contact 4 (n=95)

Do you have 'indirect contact', that is not face-to-face?

Yes – 28

No – 67

Does your child have contact with any siblings from whom they are separated? (n=91)

Yes – 43

No - 48

Any further comments regarding your experiences of contact?  
What would you change? Keep, or want more of?

"I have never seen him, got no telephone/FaceTime... the carer got to agree that to get him used to her"

"I have once a year face to face and I get one letter a year, I also get to send birthday and Christmas cards"

I didn't feel supervision was necessary but I felt the contact centre was welcoming and had lots of resources for play/creativity. I would have loved more contact ie weekly but my son was placed outwith local authority. More contact between the children would have been beneficial as I feel their bond has now been broken.

The family worker doing contact likes to chat and find out things but for me that takes time away from my child, they could sit in the back ground and wait to be spoken to. Time is precious.

Again, I am speaking as member of wider family, rather than parents. I know that contact was in unsuitable venues and supervised by unqualified overly interventionist staff. Contact with wider family members (who needed to travel distances) were obstructed by social work.

There was no desire to maintain contact with cousins and wider family despite the children's isolation and distress in care. Absolutely inhumane.

It took 2 years to establish sibling contact with a sibling who did nothing wrong.

I had to inform them I was coming, they wouldn't let me mark on his Calendar what was happening

It was like a mini celebration at first but became agonizing as we are not allowed to discuss freely. Contact suspended at this time as my 'behaviour' is unreasonable. I am autistic and failed to hold it together. It's just awful, we only had time for a brew and a piece of cake - in the pre social work contact days that was a treat. Now I personally never want to eat cake again. Then we got more time but it's awkward now. Heavy silence. I don't know if we will recover any semblance of a relationship.

Our contact sessions are continually interrupted for the smallest of reasons.

Contact is not enough, facilities are not good at the contact centre, new carpets not lino. No toys I take a taxi full up every time. No table to sit for lunch no highchairs. Social care worker assistant reports that my sons are biting and banging heads on floor after they see me when the foster carer gets them back to her house. For 9 days after she states. Contacts are happy my sons are happy but this is not reported. No positive things apart from I love seeing them and I take toys up. I take lots snacks, drinks varied. But never reported. There needs to be a witness for parents at contact. My sons cuddle me this is not reported.

The contact centre which we used was poorly equipped to meet the needs of children over the age of 3. This made it hard to settle kids and enjoy our time together.

Contact session not written up correct and in a bad way to parent. Anything about foster treatment in a bad way was not written down

Be nice to get more contact and to know if I'll get them back and it's taken too long for the assessment there doing

Contact is always so hard, my kids are happy but very confused, huge identity issues and academics have been effected also. Writing letters is a tedious task and serves no real purpose as my kids aren't told anything I write and aren't given the photos I send anyway. Just hard all round, I grieve before I see them and I grieve afterwards and I'm always left to think/feel what is the purpose of it and would it be better off I didn't see them at all

They moved our child from west coast to Highlands - six hour car journey, got there just to be told "oh its cancelled"!!!

My child has been restrained, held down and isolated she is covered in bruises and

when we complained contact was stopped.

More contact as its once a week & they are trying to get it reduced to monthly or fortnightly x

Contact minimal, contact orders not filed on time, adult siblings, niece and nephew excluded, minimal sibling contact, meetings often Cla/review scheduled for contact days.

I TAUGHT the supervising social workers how to be better parents themselves by showing them lots of new and exciting ways to interact with children whilst NOT attempting to steal them away from loved ones.

Total joke needs to be ripped up and started again from the top too sad for words

Contacts should be more structured. There is not enough time given or even any funding offered to me to be able to facilitate the care and needs of the children on these contacts I've been asking from day 1 to have my contact unsupervised and it just gets brushed off till next meeting then the next. My children was separated but I get different amount if contact time with both, making contacts very difficult when it is a family contact

I asked my sw to arrange for my son to see his older siblings it took over 4 months to have this sorted he saw them only once in the whole 6months he was away from home

I think more contact should be had with parents to help with emotional needs of the child

The contact with other sibling is only there as she has to come with me to my contact which isn't fair as I'm only allowed to see other child 3 times a year for 2 hours which isn't enough for them to get a sibling bond but then again other child also doesn't know I'm her mum and that the child with me is her sister as the SGO holder hasn't bothered to tell her so the SGO holder is known as mummy and her boyfriend of only a year is daddy and their child together is her sister

Our children have been separated against our wishes. Our older children are 35miles away from their home town and younger children are in their home town

Contact should be based on what times work for everyone not just what the foster carer wants

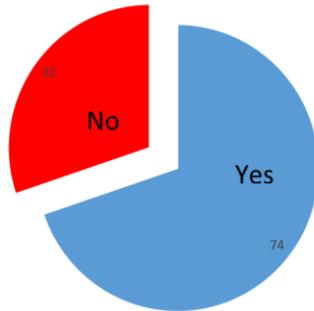
My child has been alienated - Child has only met grandfather once. Child has not seen uncle or cousins in over 15 years. and has not any other member of family. Contact has slipped to approx 2 hours once a month

It was difficult to fill as children didn't live with me. But they should never have been taken.

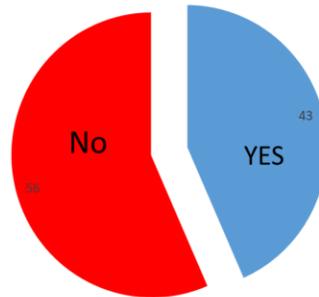
It was horrendous. My daughter had autism, which social work denied, and they told me I had to appear happy and bright and never criticise social work and never talk about court or what had happened and that if I cried or showed my emotions this would distress my daughter and so contact would immediately stop. It was supervised by 2 workers on every occasion, sitting right in our faces and writing down what we said. My daughter, having autism, could not understand why I was being so "fake" and now that she is home she has told me she believed that I thought all of this was right, that she was in the right place and that I was happy about it. Can you imagine the pain of that?

## The Law 1

Have you had legal advice and support?  
(n=106)

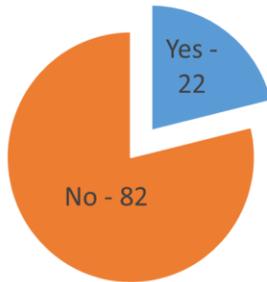


Did you have legal advice and representation pre-removal proceedings (court)? (n=99)

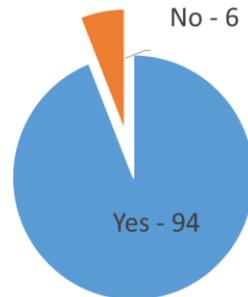


## The Law 2

Do you feel you had adequate and effective legal support?



Would you have benefited from legal support earlier?



### The Law 3: Any further comments regarding your experiences of support, or lack of it?

“I had to pay for legal representation. It cost around £15 000. Solicitors don't get involved until case goes to Children's Panel. Solicitors should be able to intervene prior to case escalating to Children's Hearing. In the case of these 2 children already mentioned, had a solicitor intervened when the 1st wildly inaccurate child plans were created, the whole stressful nonsense could have been nipped in the bud and I would have saved a great deal of money and the local authority would also have saved a great deal of money. The local authority did not once tell the children they were allowed to have an advocate or give them any information on how to secure an advocate.”

Advocacy were and are amazing but SW will hardly respond to them. I had no support at all for the first 6months and that's when they crushed me to death and did everything st the speed of knots.

I had to pay for legal representation. It cost around £15 000. Solicitors don't get involved until case goes to Children's Panel. Solicitors should be able to intervene prior to case escalating to Children's Hearing. In the case of these 2 children already mentioned, had a solicitor intervened when the 1st wildly inaccurate child plans were created, the whole stressful nonsense could have been nipped in the bud and I would have saved a great deal of money and the local authority would also have saved a great deal of money. The local authority did not once tell the children they were allowed to have an advocate or give them any information on how to secure an advocate.

The general tone of the formal legal advice that I received was to agree with everything and anything that social work said, no matter how untrue or inappropriate, and appease them at all costs in the hope that this may reduce the damage that they would inflict on my children. A friend who is a social worker was an enormous source of emotional support, and advice on the legal procedures involved

in child protections. Her advice was based on the law, statutory regulations and guidance, however the department did not follow these. A third stage complaint acknowledged that these had not been followed and instructed the social work department to issue an apology however found "no reason for the Social Work to seek general absolution from <mother> for her subjective views on their failings previously acknowledged." and refused to consider any further action.

## Anything else?

Risk of future harm is not a good enough reason to remove a kid...

Social workers have no training/knowledge of learning disabilities/difficulties, mental health in parents and the children. They have a dual and conflicting roles in that they should support families while at the same time they have created the role of child protector...

I believe more work should be done to support children living within their family in terms of support and financial help for kinship carers. It's appalling as opposed to foster care help and fees.

My children have now been returned, but the years of parental deprivation, neglect, physical and psychological abuse have taken a significant toll on their physical and emotional health as well as on their educational performance and self-esteem, while my career and general wellbeing has taken a significant hit from the impact of these events.

If there was more support from social workers and they weren't so judgemental then that would make such a difference, also if they genuinely wanted to work with families that would make a big difference...I really hope the care system is totally overhauled.

Risk of future harm is not a good enough reason to remove a kid, they just like taking babies from vulnerable people

There is no place for arrogance or ego in child protection services but unfortunately it's rife!!

Social workers have no training/knowledge of learning disabilities/difficulties, mental health in parents and the children. They have a dual and conflicting roles in that they should support families while at the same time they have created the role of child protector and take children into care at the slightest excuse.

I believe more work should be done to support children living within their family in terms of support and financial help for kinship carers. It's appalling as opposed to foster care help and fees.

If there was more support from social workers and they weren't so judgemental then that would make such a difference also if they genuinely wanted to work with families that would make a big difference. I feel there is a lot of support and groups etc for foster careers but not enough for parents. I really hope the care system is

totally overhauled.

I feel that more emphasis should be put in to helping families get their children back, as they were originally brought about to help keep families together yet over the years the number of children being taken from their parents for whatever reason has escalated tremendously, since my child was taken I have done everything that I can do to prove myself like doing courses, I've never missed a contact only ever missed one lac review yet it's still not good enough for them

My child (in foster care) was left with tooth decay from 2002 to 2005 with tooth decay - aged 5, my child had 8 teeth extracted from 2007 to 2010. We raised concern about child's teeth - A's teeth were "dirty, rotten, pitted and chipped and black stumps". 2010 we asked the Family Court for a specific order that child receive dental treatment. 2011 child received dental treatment to 16 teeth including extraction of both primary and adult teeth.

Social services put my children in some extremely dangerous situations. When my children were finally returned it was after years of physical and psychological abuse with two rubbish bags of clothes which had to be binned because of the smell of dogshit from the infested flat which they shared with three Rottweilers and the carer who was a heavy user of cocaine.... Contact was arranged in soft-play facilities which were inappropriate for my older children, the cost of travel, entrance and snacks meant that each contact cost me in the region of £100. Contact was repeatedly rearranged at short-notice, social work meetings were arranged at the same time as contact and the social workers were frequently late bringing the children, sometimes over an hour late. The social worker trailed behind me at all times, including to the bathroom leaving the children no opportunity to speak to me without being overheard. I was encouraged to consider swimming as a supervised contact activity, which I dismissed as inappropriate. This was considered unreasonable and the children were encouraged to press me to consider this and demand reasons why I would not consider taking them swimming. My children have now been returned, but the years of parental deprivation, neglect, physical and psychological abuse have taken a significant toll on their physical and emotional health as well as on their educational performance and self-esteem, while my career and general wellbeing has taken a significant hit from the impact of these events.

We have very serious complaints underway so I don't want to name individuals but I have met with Fiona Duncan and shared my story with her, and she knows the names of the people involved. My younger daughter is my adopted daughter (I'm an approved adoptive parent, not the sinister, bad parent the social worker alleged) so I have also experienced excellent social workers (in our home area of ...) who were open and honest, well informed, adhered to best practice and were in every way

worthy of praise.

Thank You

<https://parparentsadvocacyrights.com/>