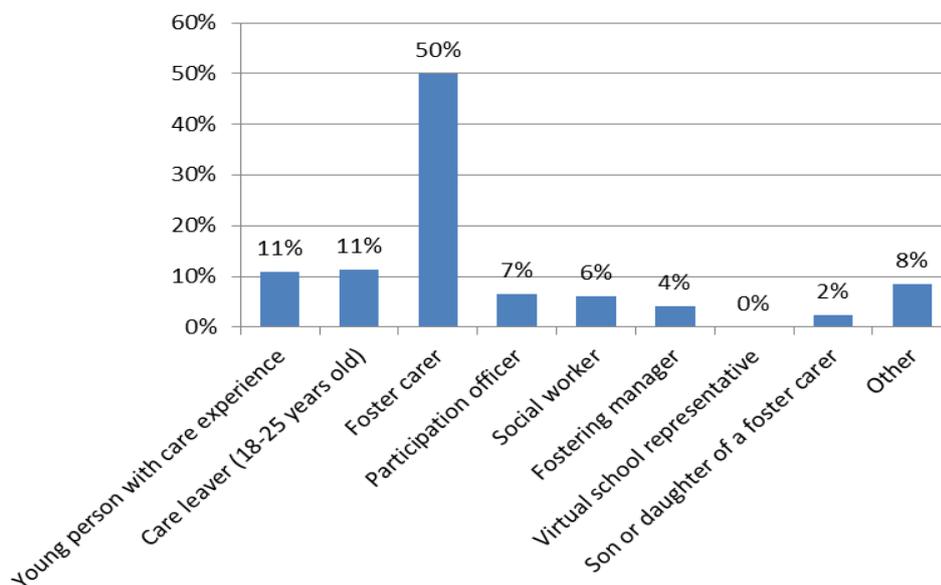


Highlights of Inspiring Voices Survey (July 2015)

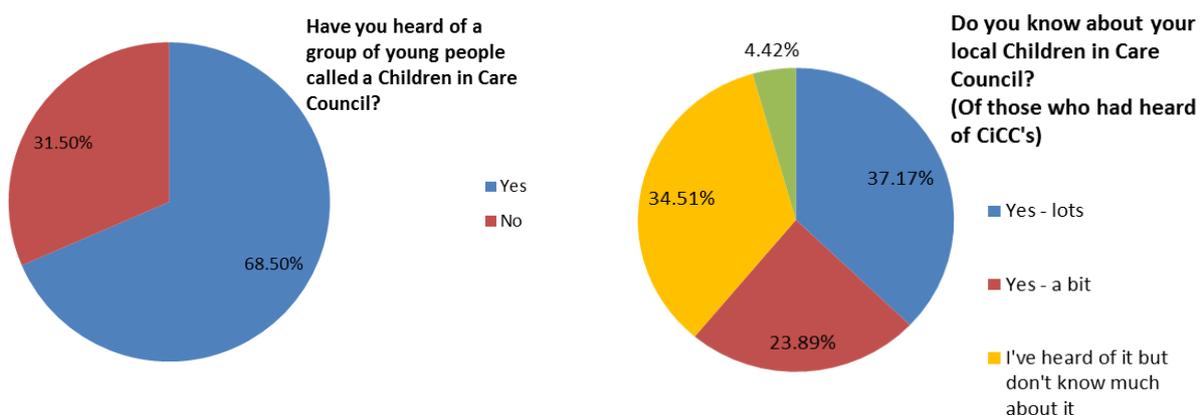
We received 167 responses for this survey from England.

Respondents

- The respondents were mostly foster carers (50%).
- Other large groups of respondents were those in care or who had been in care (22%).
- The rest of the respondents were fairly evenly split between other professionals.



How much did the respondents know about Children in Care Councils (CiCCs)?



- A large majority (68.5%) of respondents had heard of CiCCs.
- Of the 68.5% who had heard of CiCCs, around 1 in 4 did not know much about their local CiCC.
- Only 37.2% of the respondents who had heard of CiCCs knew a lot about their local CiCC.
- There was a higher awareness of CiCCs amongst professionals related to fostering (85.4%) compared to Foster carers (61.4%) or care leavers and young people with care experience (65.8%).

In response to the question **“What is the purpose of your local Children in Care Council?”** the main response was:

“It enables children in care to talk about things important to them and raise it in appropriate ways”

Some respondents gave greater detail of how the CiCCs were involved with the local authority

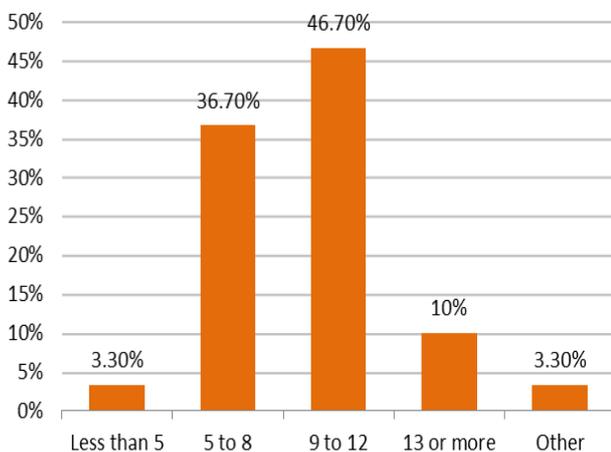
“The Children in Care Council work on matters that concern them and feed back to the corporate parents. When the Local Authority make decisions about children in care they consult with the CiCC and the CiCC have a respected input into decisions being made. They have been involved in making a difference to the way reviews are undertaken, shaped the CiC strategy, etc.”

How the CiCCs were involved with the local authority differed from authority to authority but a large number of respondents detailed that they were involved in key decisions affecting them within their local authority.

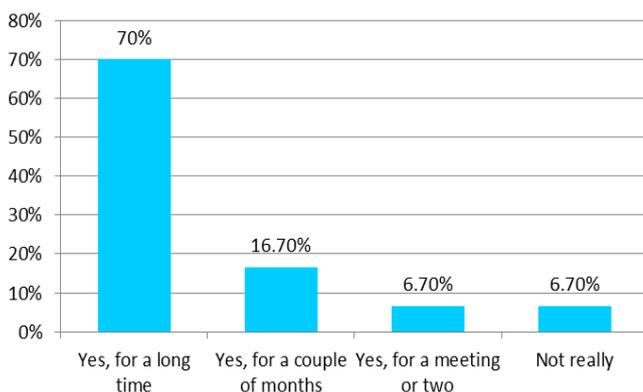
A handful of respondents did detail frustrations they had with the way the CiCCs were treated:

“we find it difficult for any of the councils to make any decisions we have a meeting once a month involving people from high up area’s within the council, but getting very little help.”

“They sometimes ask the young people highly inappropriate questions that many are not old enough to understand, never mind able to answer. If they seek opinions it may be taken into consideration when making decisions but I have seen no reference to their part in it.”

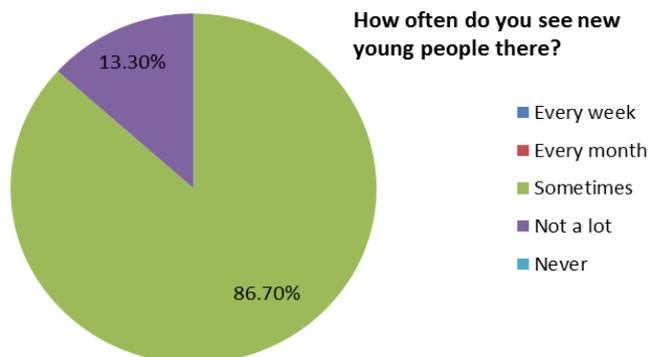


Do members of the Children in Care Council stick around?



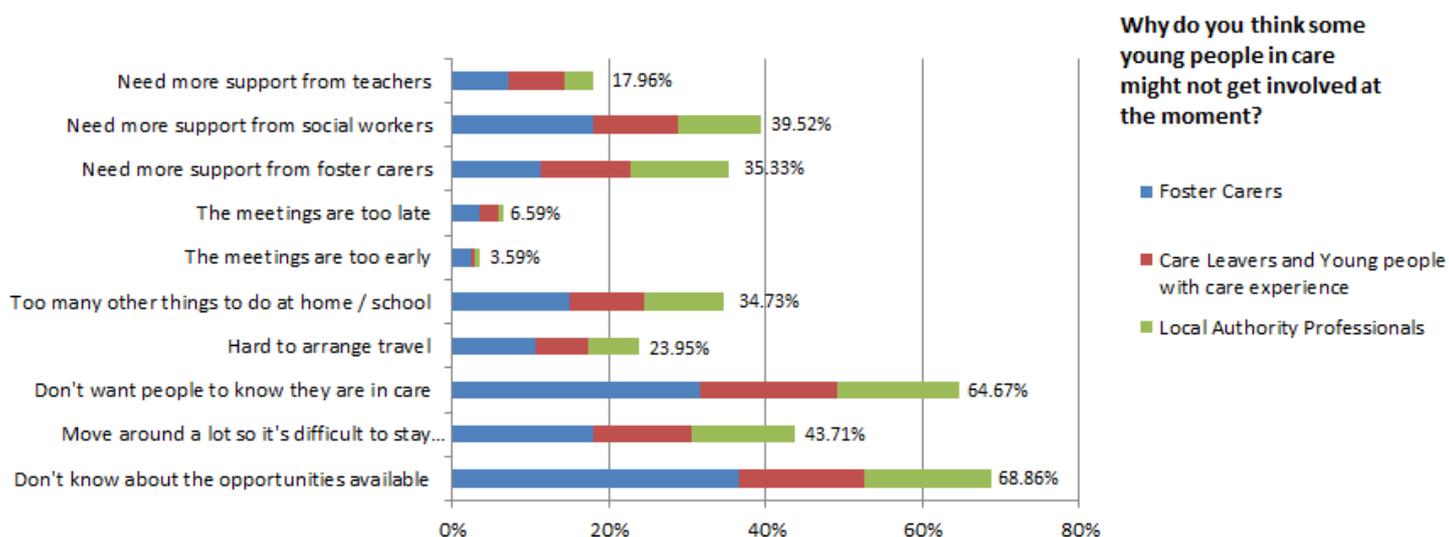
The Profile of Children in Care Councils

- Respondents detailed that 83.4% of CiCCs usually have between 5 and 12 attendees
- 1 in 10 respondents also detailed that there were larger groups of 13 or more attendees. Smaller groups of 5 or less were more unusual (3.3%)
- Most members of CiCCs stuck around for a long time (70%).
- A large majority of CiCCs only saw new attendees sometimes (86.7%) with the rest not seeing new attendees a lot at the meetings.
- This shows that some CiCCs are largely static in their make-up, attracting relatively few new attendees.
- Only 30 respondents answered these questions about CiCCs.



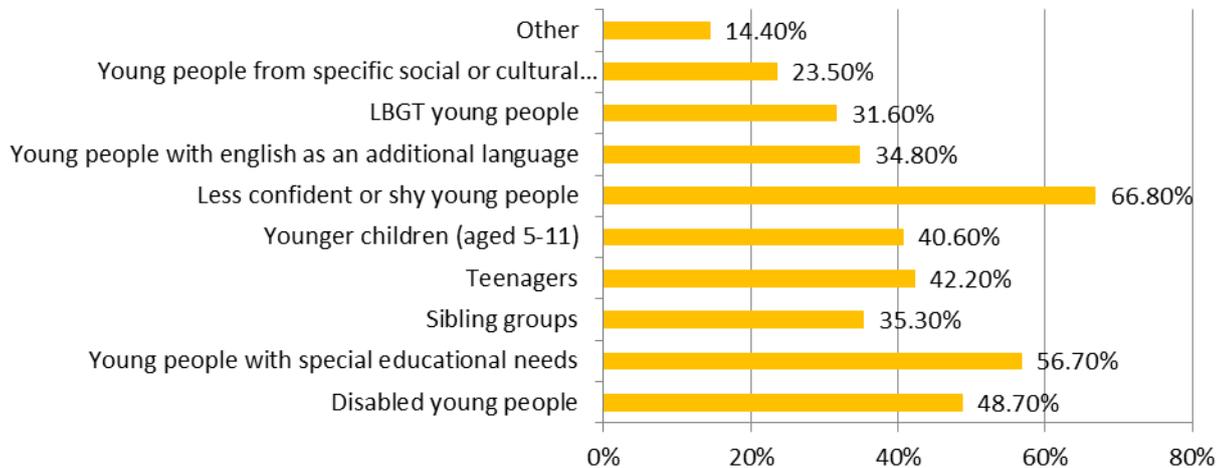
- Most respondents were care leavers or young people with care experience.
- The remaining respondents were other professionals related to foster care.
- The lack of foster carers responding to these questions suggests that, as a group, they know little or nothing about CiCCs.

Barriers to Participation



- The main barriers, identified by respondents, preventing young people from getting involved in CiCCs are that they are unaware of the opportunities available (68.9%) and they don't want people to know they are in care (64.7%).
- Many respondents highlighted the need for more support from foster carers (35.3%), social workers (39.5%) and teachers (18%).
- Around 2 in 5 respondents highlighted that because young people in care move around a lot, it can make it more difficult to participate.
- The most common responses amongst care leavers and young people with care experience were that they didn't know the opportunities were available (16%) and that they don't want people to know they are in care (17%).

Are there any particular groups of young people in care you feel need more of a say?



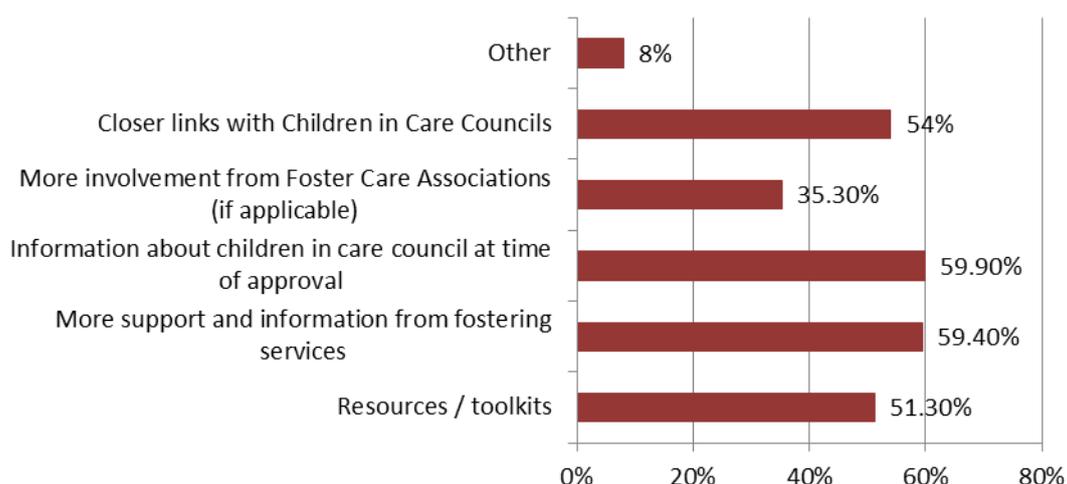
- Of the more specific barriers for young people in care, less confident and shy young people were highlighted as the main group in need of more of a say (66.8%).
- Over half of respondents indicated that young people with special educational needs need more of a say, with almost half saying the same for disabled young people (48.7%).
- All groups, excluding 'other' or 'young people from specific social or cultural backgrounds' had more than 3 in 10 of respondents saying they needed more of a say.
- The high response for this question shows that there are significant barriers to participation facing all groups and that these groups need to have better access and opportunities have their voices heard.

Analysis of findings

Static attendance and lack of knowledge about Children in Care Councils

- Respondents highlighted that the make-up of CiCCs is generally static with relatively few new attendees joining over time.
- As only 61.4% of foster carers and 65.8% of care leavers and young people with care experience have heard of CiCCs, this suggests more information needs to be given about local groups.

Are there things that would help foster carers to encourage young people to participate?



- A solution to this lack of information could be, as 3 in 5 of respondents highlighted, to give information about CiCCs to foster carers at the time of approval.
- This would help both foster carers and children in care to be more aware of their local council at the earliest opportunity and encourage new attendees to join their CiCC.
- Over half of respondents also suggested that foster carers could be given more support by fostering services around participation, have more involvement in CiCCs, and more access to resources or toolkits.

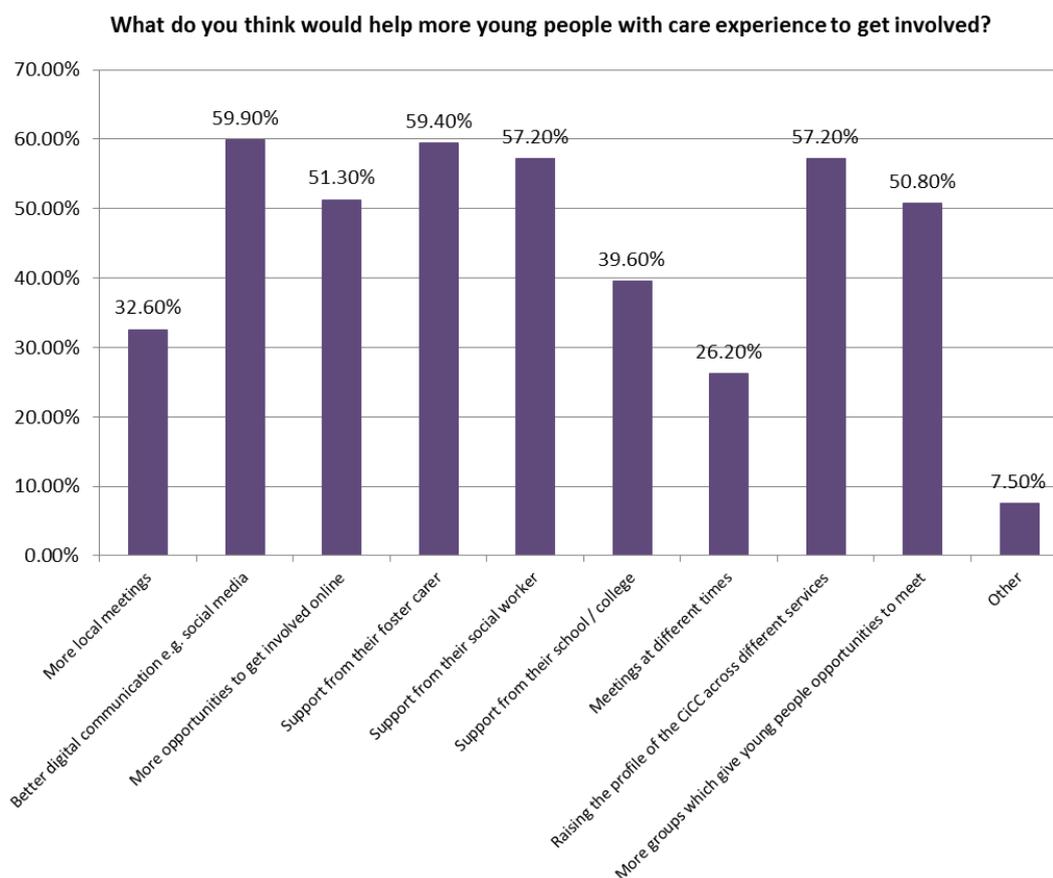
Stigma around Fostering and a lack of knowledge of the opportunities to get involved

- The biggest general barrier to participation identified by respondents was that they did not want people to know they are in care.
- Tackling the stigma around this is important but there are other ways of confronting this problem such as highlighting the benefits of attending CiCCs.
- Those with experience of attending CiCCs are in a good position to give information and explain the benefits to young people in care, and could inspire them to attend the group in future. This theme was raised by many respondents:

“By going along to the meeting I have gained confidence to talk in front large groups of people.”

“The young people that attend have built relationships up with one another, grown in confidence which is seen through the things they choose to do take part in and have fun in a safe space with other young people looked after.”

“The young people enjoy learning new skills and meeting loads of new people. They often feel like they are in a place where they belong as they realise there is lots of young people going through similar things to themselves.”



- Making young people in care aware of these benefits through highlighting positive experiences would help more young people in care feel confident to attend and express their views.
- The second biggest barrier respondents highlighted was the lack of knowledge about the opportunities available.
- This problem is highlighted in the responses, with 57.2% of respondents suggesting that raising the profile of the Children in Care Council across different services would encourage more young people to get involved.
- Over half of respondents thought that more support from foster carers and social workers would help.
- 3 in 5 respondents answered that better digital communication e.g. social media would help get young people with care experience to be more involved, with appropriate safeguarding in place.

Children in Care not having their voices heard

- Less confident and shy young people and those who were disabled or had a special educational need were particularly highlighted as not having their voices heard.
- A solution to this would be to have Young Ambassadors work with CiCCs to make sure they are inclusive of everyone and that all young people attending are comfortable expressing their opinions.
- It would also be important to use Foster Care Champions to make sure young people, in particular disabled young people, have access to their local CiCC and are well supported.