



Cheshire East

# **TOGETHER** for Children and Young People

*Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young*

## Care Leavers Survey

December 2021



# Care Leavers Survey 2021 Report

## Survey Methodology:

The Care Leavers survey was conducted during October and November 2021. 76 completed surveys were received in total. The survey was accessed by young people using a website link or a paper copy. This was promoted to young people via their social workers, P.A.s, by social media platforms and newsletters. The following report includes the following:

- Responses of the survey (qualitative and quantitative data)
- Feedback and recommendations from themed focus groups as a result of the initial survey
- Pledges and actions from staff, partners and decision makers in Cheshire East that will come as a result of the survey and feedback sessions.

The aim is for this report to be a working document to ensure we can evidence change as a result of Care Leavers having a say on the services, support and decisions that affect their lives.

This survey will be repeated every 2 years to ensure that Care Leavers feel the impact of changes made.

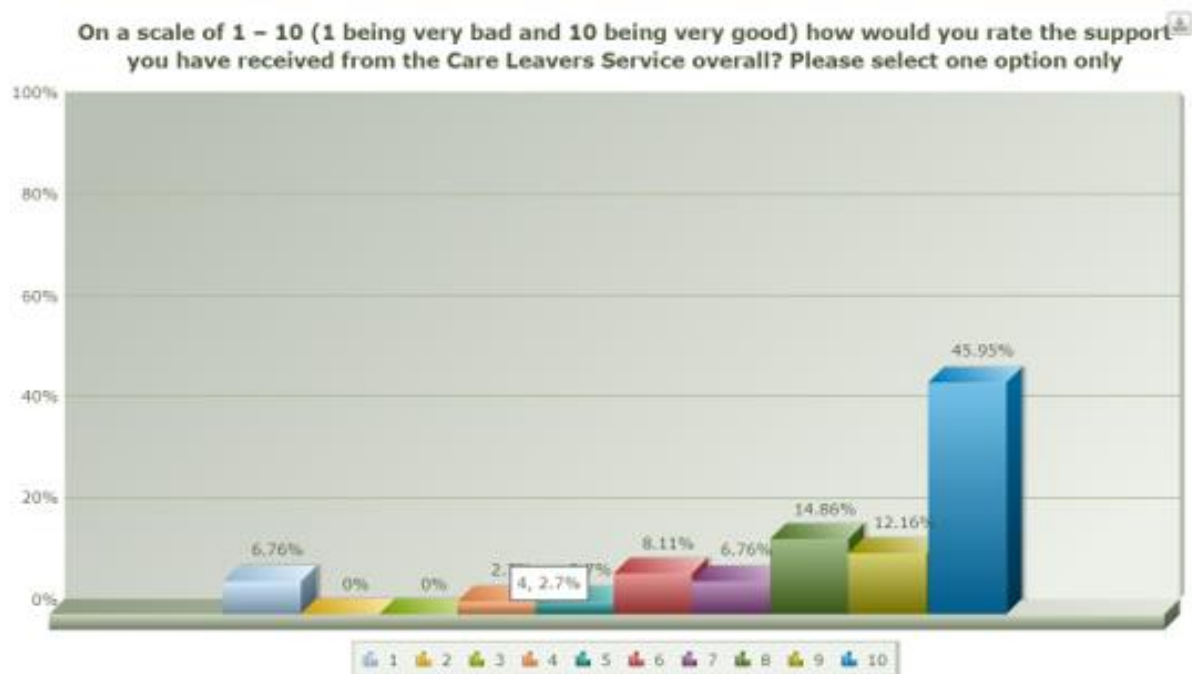


## Care Leaver Support Service Rating

Respondents were asked to rate from 1 to 10 (1 being the worst) the support they received from the Care Leaver Service.

Just under half the respondents (34 out of 74, 45.9%) rated the support 10 out of 10, with 20 out of 74 giving a rating of 7 or under.

In the 2019 Care Leavers survey (completed by 48 Care Leavers) over half of respondents (26 out of 48, 54%) rated the support 10 out of 10, with just 2 out of 48 rating the support as less than 7 out of 10.



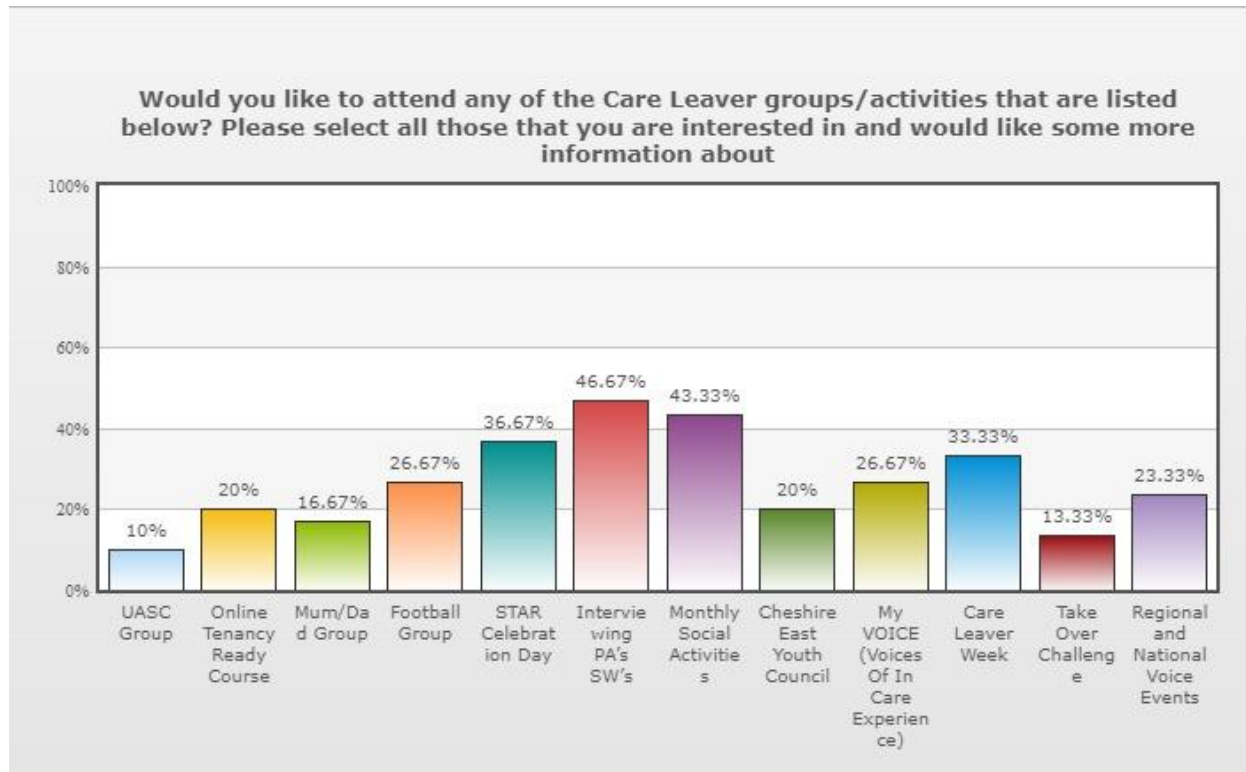
Despite the very high ratings, some respondents suggested how their score could be improved further:

- “[Name] has been really good with the support but when I have contacted a duty worker and has been difficult to get the support what I needed for that situation”
- “My social worker left and I've not had a replacement. I also had to chase my birthday money and travel money. I have not had my travel money reimbursed yet”
- “Pathway Plan when it should be, more support from PA and availability.”
- “more regular visits to get to know my PA”
- “more visits and communication to support me”



### Care Leavers Groups and Activities:

Respondents were asked whether they would be interested in attending any of a selection of groups and activities. "Interviewing PA's SW's" was the top choice, followed by "Monthly social activities."



Respondents were then asked what other groups/activities they would want to be available. Suggestions included:

- Celebration Event
- football in Macclesfield
- Most people who are leaving care will be at the age they may find it uncomfortable or even slightly embarrassing to go to large group events like the ones listed, a group that is smaller or even one to one with someone they know/trust but later becomes bigger could make a lot more people feel comfortable to attend, Especially people who aren't comfortable in new situations or with new people.
- Art competitions.
- friendship group



## Personal Advisor:

Respondents were asked a number of questions relating to the performance of their Personal Advisor. Overall, the results (shown in the table below) were overwhelmingly positive. In the 2019 survey it was a yes or no question. In the 2021 survey we also gave the options of neither agree nor disagree and unsure/I don't know (subsequently the 2021 figures appear lower than 2019.)

|  | 2021   | 2021  | 2019 | 2019 |
|--|--------|-------|------|------|
|  | Yes    | No    | Yes  | No   |
| Do you feel listened to by your PA?                              | 82.40% | 8.20% | 98%  | 2%   |
| Do you feel confident contacting your PA when you need support?  | 83.80% | 8.20% | 96%  | 4%   |
| Does your PA discuss and share these groups/activities with you? | 68.90% | 9.50% | 82%  | 18%  |

Respondents to these questions were asked why they answered the way they did, the responses included the following;

- "My PA always keeps in contact with me, regularly updating me about when things are getting done"
- "Best PA ever"
- "Because I have grown to trust my pa and she has helped me in a lot of ways"
- "He very lovely to talk to make me laugh all the time and I not scared to talk to him or ask for his help."
- "she has helped me through a lot and always know if i'm stuck i can go to her."
- "I am usually quite independent, but she responds straight away if she is able to and always goes above and beyond to try and solve my needs."
- "My PA is amazing! She's always available to talk and makes time for me when I'm worried"
- "[Name] has helped me by taking me on the NEET course and getting me into college I contact him all the time when I need advice."
- "Whenever I need to contact my P.A in an emergency or if I need help with something, first she has got back to be straight away most of the time, or as soon as she can, and she has always tried to help me out to the best of her ability. She has never left me struggling, even in the hardest situations, and she has been there for me every time I have needed her support."
- "I have struggled many times with Mental Health, Housing Trouble, Food issues and more, I felt each time I was able to speak to My PA each time and trusted the advice she gave completely."





**Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

- Easier accessibility to the service. If my social worker/P.A. isn't available I should know who I can contact for support and help. An alternative contact. If I contact my social worker/P.A. it can take up to 2 weeks to get a response. I think all social workers should respond within 3 working days.
- If a young person asks for something and it's not possible then social workers should have an open and honest conversation with young people about the decision and give reasons so that young people feel they have been listened to and understand why something can't happen.
- Support from P.As shouldn't just stop at 25 years of age. Young people should be assessed and only stopped when the young person is ready.
- For P.As to let young people know when they are going on annual leave and to ensure they know who they can contact in their absence.
- For P.As to check in on young people at least every 6 months even when there's been no need for any communication. Just to check in so that young people feel like the support is still there.

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

- Look at better forms of communication in line with needs of care leavers, improve communication/accessibility. Work with care leavers on making the service more accessible
- Involve Care Leavers in service delivery – e.g. guidelines, timescales etc.
- Introduce a Care Leaver App
- Communicate – corporate parenting – lifelong commitment



## Employment & Education

Respondents were asked multiple questions relating to employment and education. The majority of respondents were neither interested in potential work experience or an apprenticeship, and a not insignificant number of candidates felt there were barriers stopping them from getting an apprenticeship (these outcomes were the same in the survey completed in 2019.)

|   | Yes    | No     | Neither Agree<br>Nor Disagree | Unsure/Don't<br>Know | N/A    |
|---|--------|--------|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| <b>How strongly do you agree or disagree that you know how to access education, employment, training and/or apprenticeship support?</b> | 90.70% | 1.30%  | 6.70%                         | 1.30%                | N/A    |
| <b>If you are not in education, employment or training are you aware of Journey First?</b>  | 33.33% | 16.67% | N/A                           | N/A                  | 50.00% |
| <b>Would you be interested in us offering you some work experience and/or an apprenticeship?</b>  | 42.66% | 57.33% | N/A                           | N/A                  | N/A    |
| <b>Are there any barriers which are stopping you from getting an apprenticeship currently?</b>  | 32.43% | 67.57% | N/A                           | N/A                  | N/A    |

Following these questions, respondents were asked what barriers (if any) exist that is stopping them from getting an apprenticeship. The following are the barriers identified:

- Mental Health (8 comments)
- Pregnancy/Child to care for (4 comments)
- Location/Transport (1 comment)
- Current Job/education (5 comments)



Respondents were also asked what work experience and/or apprenticeship opportunities they would like to be available. The results are as follows:

- Childcare/Social Care (7 comments)
- Engineering (2 comment)
- Electrician (1 comment)
- Landscaping (4 comment)
- Barber/Hairdressing (2 comments)
- Baking (1 comment)
- Business (3 comments)
- I.T. (2 comments)
- Animal Care (1 comment)
- Armed Forces (1 comment)

**Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

No recommendations from Care Leavers at this time.

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

- We continue to work with care leavers to expand our EET offer. We will use venture with confidence NEET programme, apprenticeship etc.





## Housing, Safety & Pathway Plan

When asked about their attitudes towards housing, respondents gave mixed results. However, questions relating to respondent's safety and their pathway plan was significantly more positive:

|  | 2021   | 2021   | 2021                 | 2019 | 2019 |
|--|--------|--------|----------------------|------|------|
|  | Yes    | No     | Not sure/no response | Yes  | No   |
| Are there enough housing choices when you leave care?              | 45.30% | 28.00% | 26.70%               | 59%  | 41%  |
| Are housing choices in Cheshire East in a good location for you?   | 26.00% | 18.90% | 55.10%               | 64%  | 36%  |
| Do you feel safe in your home?                                     | 85.30% | 5.30%  | 9.40%                | 91%  | 9%   |
| If you didn't feel safe at home do you know who you would contact? | 90.60% | 4.10%  | 5.30%                | 93%  | 7%   |
| Have you seen your pathway plan?                                   | 63.50% | 13.70% | 22.80%               | 90%  | 10%  |
| Has your Pathway Plan helped you to achieve your goals in life?    | 47.60% | 10.80% | 41.60%               | 74%  | 26%  |

Respondents were asked to comment on how their Pathway Plan helped them achieve their goals. Alternatively, if their plan did not help them, how this could be improved:

- "It has helped me with decisions about my future"
- "They helped me a lot for any problems I had about my house and they helped me with the doctor."
- "Would like to of seen my pathway plan feels like decisions are being made behind my back"
- "It reflects what I want to achieve"
- "My pathway plan has helped me become stronger and helped me do the right things instead of the wrong"
- "I don't know what one is"
- "It gives me a plan for the next 6 months and gives me hope for the future"
- "Not got one and nearly 18."
- "My pathway plan has always given me a sense of structure to my life over the period of time between each one. I am always aware of the things that are going on and I am also able to have control over the direction i want my life to go, with the help of my P.A."



**Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

- When young people are being moved, we should receive regular updates so that we feel like we are being supported.
- For all young people to feel like they are being consulted about where they will be moving to.

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

- The only circumstances when we wouldn't consult with young people is if it is an emergency
- Ignition Panel – encourage attendance, Care Leavers and professionals like it being virtual don't have to sit with professionals and spend a whole afternoon attending. Based on feedback from care leavers that they prefer it virtually.
- Pathway Plan – make it a living document, updated more regularly with each care leaver voice. Should be updated minimum every 6 months. Strive to make sure this offer is the same and consistent for all care leavers



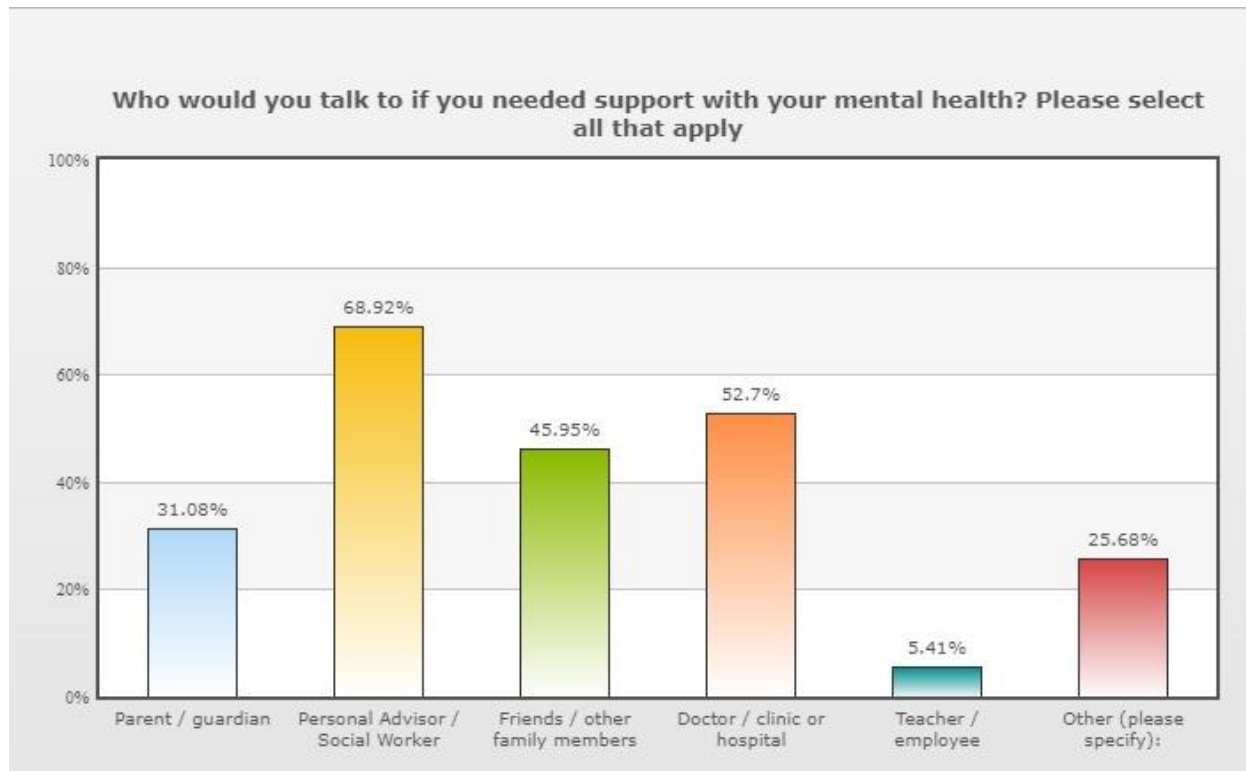
## Family & Health

Respondents were asked a number of questions relating to their physical and mental health. Overall, the results (shown in the table below) were overwhelmingly positive. In the 2019 survey it was a yes or no question. In the 2021 survey we also gave the options of neither agree nor disagree and unsure/I don't know (subsequently the 2021 figures appear lower than 2019.)

|  | 2021   | 2021   | 2021                 | 2019 | 2019 |
|--|--------|--------|----------------------|------|------|
|  | Yes    | No     | Not sure/no response | Yes  | No   |
| Do you see the family members you want to see?   | 83.30% | 1.40%  | 15.30%               | 80%  | 20%  |
| Do you feel confident in making an appointment about your health?  | 73.40% | 14.70% | 11.70%               | 84%  | 16%  |
| Do you feel that your physical health is being made a priority?  | 77.40% | 6.70%  | 15.90%               | 80%  | 20%  |
| Do you feel that your mental health is being made a priority?  | 65.30% | 9.40%  | 25.30%               | 100% | 0%   |
| Do you feel that you are well informed of how to make good choices regarding your health, and the local services to help you to do so? | 78.70% | 4%     | 17.3                 | 98%  | 2    |

Respondents were asked who they would talk to if they needed support with their mental health. The following are the results:





Additionally, respondents were asked if there was any way they could be made to feel happier. The following are the comments made:

- “Be given a nice well deserved break with peace and no stress”
- “Have a PA up until you’re 25, not just until you finish education....even if it means just going for a chat and a coffee every so often as it can get lonely sometimes.”
- “Moving into my own place”
- “getting a job I enjoy a lot”
- “Find a place of my own with my unborn first child”
- “Joining a gym and practicing positive affirmations for improving self love for my mental health”
- “Getting an ADHD diagnosis”
- “better education around healthy eating”
- “Maybe go back to the gym”
- “Explain about leaving care and everything earlier.”
- “Some more activities maybe with other foster children, helps with communication and team building as I am very quiet.”



**Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

- If a decision has been made that a young person is not allowed to see a family member (even through supervised visits) then they should be informed, and reasons given so that young people understand why. Better communication from all concerned.

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

- As young people move into adulthood we need to ensure that they are aware of their rights, but also understand the rights of family members that may not want to see them.
- Recommissioning emotional health and wellbeing service. Looking at ways at improving the offer. Looking at specific needs of migrant young people. The Care Leaver PAs and PureInsight offer social groups that are fantastic for wellbeing.





## Preparing for Adulthood

### Financial

When asked about their ability to pay bills and their ability to function financially, respondents answered mostly positively. In the 2019 survey it was a yes or no question. In the 2021 survey we also gave the options of neither agree nor disagree and unsure/I don't know.

|  | 2021   | 2021   | 2021                 | 2019 | 2019 |
|--|--------|--------|----------------------|------|------|
|  | Yes    | No     | Not sure/no response | Yes  | No   |
| I know how to / feel that I can budget                         | 70.20% | 20.30% | 9.50%                | N/A  | N/A  |
| Do you know what support there is if you struggle financially? | 77%    | 9.50%  | 13.50%               | 76%  | 24%  |
| Do you feel in control of the decisions that affect your life? | 85.20% | 6.80%  | 8%                   | 91%  | 9%   |

### Adulthood, Independence & Additional comments

Respondents were asked what could be done to help them become more independent and better transition to adulthood. The following are the comments made for both questions:

- "More dedicated services post 18 to 21. I was dealt with poorly from 18years to 20/21 resulted in a complaint"
- "When in foster care I believe young people should get more support and more guidance towards adult hood I believe some foster carers should do a bit more towards the young person to help them prepare and help them with any difficulties they may have and social workers should do more to help the young person to know there choices at an early stage etc option to where they live"
- "Nothing"
- "Have adult classes like how to cook budget and teach people about after care adult hood"
- "More support on skills to live on your own e.g. cooking classes, Classes on getting a house mortgages and leases that type of stuff."
- "More help with job"
- "Young care leavers need to be advised in good timing what support is available financially and in terms of housing so that they can make decisions ahead of time where they will be comfortable and able to feel safe and secure. This should be made a priority for them as some young adults may feel reluctant to ask or may not feel as though they are able to ask. They should be sat down



with formally and be told the pros and cons to their decisions and separate plans should be put in place for this specifically.”

- “more help with budgeting”
- “Nothing”
- “Budgeting”
- “Many life skill courses that are given to people in care can often be rushed or even skipped, Most do not actually prepare for actual adult living or are very basic I.E Can this person make food, can this person budget for a food shop, Which sound good but usually that food is a sandwich and that budgeting is for some milk etc, A more realistic approach might help or even allowing people who have been through care and dealt with those things to go over and help with what's in the Courses.”

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any further comments to make. The following are the comments made:

- “Very supportive!”
- “I think the service is good there is nothing that can be done to improve it”
- “That the social services are brilliant”
- “My Pa has helped me with alot in short space of time and helped me when I've had no one to turn to. I'll always be grateful”

#### **Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

- For young people to start learning the skills to be independent from the age of 15 years old and not just before they turn 18. That way all young people feel prepared.

#### **Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

Independence packs available from the age of 14

Foster Carers to engage and use independence packs

Young people who are placed out of access can still gain access

Tenancy Readiness Course kept online and accessible – improved rates of completion – accepted in lieu of a reference for housing

Cost of living – working with council and partners to seek additional funding to support care leavers during winter

